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MYSTERY and DETECTIVE STORIES

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New York
The Review of Reviews Company
1907

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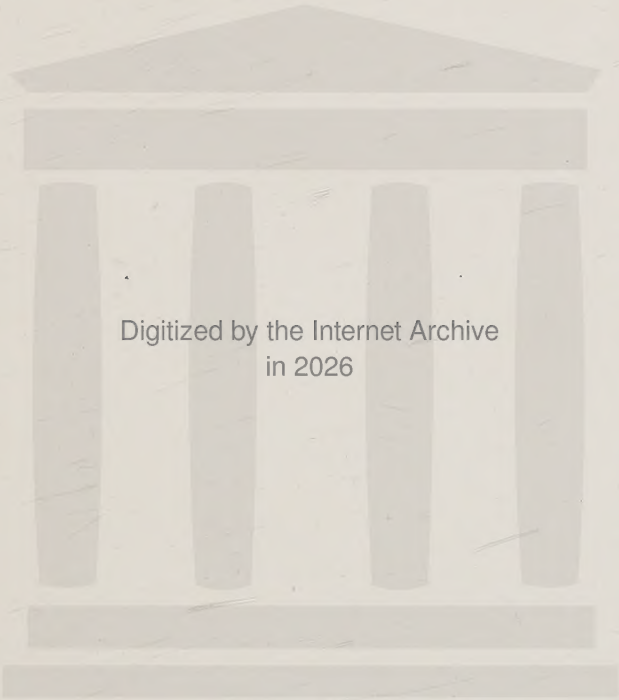

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"Her Countenance Grew Fierce"

To illustrate "The Incantation," by Bulwer-Lytton

J. R. Williams

Library of
The World's Best

MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE STORIES

Edited by

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

ENGLISH :: IRISH

Fitzjames O'Brien — Charles Robert Maturin
Bulwer-Lytton — Laurence Sterne
Thomas De Quincey — William Makepeace Thackeray
And Others

New York
The Review of Reviews Company
1907

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Fitzjames O'Brien

The Golden Ingot

I HAD just retired to rest, with my eyes almost blind with the study of a new work on physiology by M. Brown-Séquard, when the night bell was pulled violently.

It was winter, and I confess I grumbled as I rose and went downstairs to open the door. Twice that week I had been aroused long after midnight for the most trivial causes. Once, to attend upon the son and heir of a wealthy family, who had cut his thumb with a penknife, which, it seems, he insisted on taking to bed with him; and once, to restore a young gentleman to consciousness, who had been found by his horrified parent stretched insensible on the staircase. Diachylon in the one case and ammonia in the other were all that my patients required; and I had a faint suspicion that the present summons was perhaps occasioned by no case more necessitous than those I have quoted. I was too young in my profession, however, to neglect opportunities. It is only when a physician rises to a very large practice that he can afford to be inconsiderate. I was on the first step of the ladder, so I humbly opened my door.

A woman was standing ankle deep in the snow that lay upon the stoop. I caught but a dim glimpse of her form, for the night was cloudy; but I could hear her teeth rattling like castanets, and, as the sharp wind blew her clothes close to her form, I could discern from the sharpness of the outlines that she was very scantily supplied with raiment.

"Come in, come in, my good woman," I said hastily, for the wind seemed to catch eagerly at the opportunity of making itself at home in my hall, and was rapidly forcing an entrance through the half-open door. "Come in, you can tell me all you have to communicate inside."

She slipped in like a ghost, and I closed the door. While I was striking a light in my office, I could hear her teeth still clicking, out in the dark hall, till it seemed as if some skeleton was chattering. As soon as I obtained a light I begged her to enter the room, and, without occupying myself particularly about her appearance, asked her abruptly what her business was.

"My father has met with a severe accident," she said, "and requires instant surgical aid. I entreat you to come to him immediately."

The freshness and the melody of her voice startled me. Such voices rarely, if ever, issue from any but beautiful forms. I looked at her attentively, but, owing to a nondescript species of shawl in which her head was wrapped, I could discern nothing beyond what seemed to be a pale, thin face and large eyes. Her dress was lamentable. An old silk, of a color now unrecognizable, clung to her figure in those limp folds which are so eloquent of misery. The creases where it had been folded were worn nearly through, and the edges of the skirt had decayed into a species of irregular fringe, which was clotted and discolored with mud. Her shoes—which were but half concealed by this scanty garment — were shapeless and soft with moisture. Her hands were hidden under the ends of the shawl which covered her head and hung down over a bust, the outlines of which, although angular, seemed to possess grace. Poverty, when partially shrouded, seldom fails to interest: witness the statue of the Veiled Beggar, by Monti.

"In what manner was your father hurt?" I asked, in a tone considerably softened from the one in which I put my first question.

"He blew himself up, sir, and is terribly wounded."

"Ah! He is in some factory, then?"

"No, sir, he is a chemist."

"A chemist? Why, he is a brother professional. Wait an instant, and I will slip on my coat and go with you. Do you live far from here?"

"In the Seventh Avenue, not more than two blocks from the end of this street."

"So much the better. We will be with him in a few minutes. Did you leave anyone in attendance on him?"

"No, sir. He will allow no one but myself to enter his laboratory. And, injured as he is, I could not induce him to quit it."

"Indeed! He is engaged in some great research, perhaps? I have known such cases."

We were passing under a lamp-post, and the woman suddenly turned and glared at me with a look of such wild terror that for an instant I involuntarily glanced round me under the impression that some terrible peril, unseen by me, was menacing us both.

"Don't—don't ask me any questions," she said breathlessly. "He will tell you all. But do, oh, do hasten! Good God! he may be dead by this time!"

I made no reply, but allowed her to grasp my hand, which she did with a bony, nervous clutch, and endeavored with some difficulty to keep pace with the long strides—I might well call them bounds, for they seemed the springs of a wild animal rather than the paces of a young girl—with which she covered the ground. Not a word more was uttered until we stopped before a shabby, old-fashioned tenement house in the Seventh Avenue, not far above Twenty-third Street. She pushed the door open with a convulsive pressure, and, still retaining hold of my hand, literally dragged me upstairs to what seemed to be a back offshoot from the main building, as high, perhaps, as the fourth story. In a moment more I found myself in a moderate-sized chamber, lit by a single lamp. In one corner, stretched motionless on a wretched pallet bed, I beheld what I supposed to be the figure of my patient.

"He is there," said the girl; "go to him. See if he is dead—I dare not look."

I made my way as well as I could through the numberless dilapidated chemical instruments with which the room was littered. A French chafing dish supported on an iron

tripod had been overturned, and was lying across the floor, while the charcoal, still warm, was scattered around in various directions. Crucibles, alembics, and retorts were confusedly piled in various corners, and on a small table I saw distributed in separate bottles a number of mineral and metallic substances, which I recognized as antimony, mercury, plumbago, arsenic, borax, etc. It was veritably the apartment of a poor chemist. All the apparatus had the air of being second-hand. There was no luster of exquisitely annealed glass and highly polished metals, such as dazzles one in the laboratory of the prosperous analyst. The makeshifts of poverty were everywhere visible. The crucibles were broken, or gallipots were used instead of crucibles. The colored tests were not in the usual transparent vials, but were placed in ordinary black bottles. There is nothing more melancholy than to behold science or art in distress. A threadbare scholar, a tattered book, or a battered violin is a mute appeal to our sympathy.

I approached the wretched pallet bed on which the victim of chemistry was lying. He breathed heavily, and had his head turned toward the wall. I lifted his arm gently to arouse his attention. "How goes it, my poor friend?" I asked him. "Where are you hurt?"

In a moment, as if startled by the sound of my voice, he sprang up in his bed, and cowered against the wall like a wild animal driven to bay. "Who are you? I don't know you. Who brought you here? You are a stranger. How dare you come into my private rooms to spy upon me?"

And as he uttered this rapidly with a frightful nervous energy, I beheld a pale distorted face, draped with long gray hair, glaring at me with a mingled expression of fury and terror.

"I am no spy," I answered mildly. "I heard that you had met with an accident, and have come to cure you. I am Dr. Luxor, and here is my card."

The old man took the card, and scanned it eagerly. "You are a physician?" he inquired distrustfully.

"And surgeon also."

"You are bound by oath not to reveal the secrets of your patients."

"Undoubtedly."

"I am afraid that I am hurt," he continued faintly, half sinking back in the bed.

I seized the opportunity to make a brief examination of his body. I found that the arms, a part of the chest, and a part of the face were terribly scorched; but it seemed to me that there was nothing to be apprehended but pain.

"You will not reveal anything that you may learn here?" said the old man, feebly fixing his eyes on my face while I was applying a soothing ointment to the burns. "You will promise me."

I nodded assent.

"Then I will trust you. Cure me—I will pay you well."

I could scarce help smiling. If Lorenzo de' Medici, conscious of millions of ducats in his coffers, had been addressing some leech of the period, he could not have spoken with a loftier air than this inhabitant of the fourth story of a tenement house in the Seventh Avenue.

"You must keep quiet," I answered. "Let nothing irritate you. I will leave a composing draught with your daughter, which she will give you immediately. I will see you in the morning. You will be well in a week."

"Thank God!" came in a murmur from a dusk corner near the door. I turned, and beheld the dim outline of the girl, standing with clasped hands in the gloom of the dim chamber.

"My daughter!" screamed the old man, once more leaping up in the bed with renewed vitality. "You have seen her, then? When? Where? Oh, may a thousand cur——"

"Father! father! Anything—anything but that. Don't, don't curse me!" And the poor girl, rushing in, flung herself sobbing on her knees beside his pallet.

"Ah, brigand! You are there, are you? Sir," said he, turning to me, "I am the most unhappy man in the world. Talk of Sisyphus rolling the ever-recoiling stone—of Prometheus gnawed by the vulture since the birth of time.

The fables yet live. There is my rock, forever crushing me back! there is my eternal vulture, feeding upon my heart! There! there! there!" And, with an awful gesture of malediction and hatred, he pointed with his wounded hand, swathed and shapeless with bandages, at the cowering, sobbing, wordless woman by his side.

I was too much horror-stricken to attempt even to soothe him. The anger of blood against blood has an electric power which paralyzes bystanders.

"Listen to me, sir," he continued, "while I skin this painted viper. I have your oath; you will not reveal. I am an alchemist, sir. Since I was twenty-two years old, I have pursued the wonderful and subtle secret. Yes, to unfold the mysterious Rose guarded with such terrible thorns; to decipher the wondrous Table of Emerald; to accomplish the mystic nuptials of the Red King and the White Queen; to marry them soul to soul and body to body, forever and ever, in the exact proportions of land and water—such has been my sublime aim, such has been the splendid feat that I have accomplished."

I recognized at a glance, in this incomprehensible farrago, the *argot* of the true alchemist. Ripley, Flamel, and others have supplied the world, in their works, with the melancholy spectacle of a scientific bedlam.

"Two years since," continued the poor man, growing more and more excited with every word that he uttered—"two years since, I succeeded in solving the great problem—in transmuting the baser metals into gold. None but myself, that girl, and God knows the privations I had suffered up to that time. Food, clothing, air, exercise, everything but shelter, was sacrificed toward the one great end. Success at last crowned my labors. That which Nicholas Flamel did in 1382, that which George Ripley did at Rhodes in 1460, that which Alexander Sethon and Michael Scudivogius did in the seventeenth century, I did in 1856. I made gold! I said to myself, 'I will astonish New York more than Flamel did Paris.' He was a poor copyist, and suddenly launched into magnificence. I had scarce a rag

to my back: I would rival the Medicis. I made gold every day. I toiled night and morning; for I must tell you that I never was able to make more than a certain quantity at a time, and that by a process almost entirely dissimilar to those hinted at in those books of alchemy I had hitherto consulted. But I had no doubt that facility would come with experience, and that ere long I should be able to eclipse in wealth the richest sovereigns of the earth.

"So I toiled on. Day after day I gave to this girl here what gold I succeeded in fabricating, telling her to store it away after supplying our necessities. I was astonished to perceive that we lived as poorly as ever. I reflected, however, that it was perhaps a commendable piece of prudence on the part of my daughter. Doubtless, I said, she argues that the less we spend the sooner we shall accumulate a capital wherewith to live at ease; so, thinking her course a wise one, I did not reproach her with her niggardliness, but toiled on, amid want, with closed lips.

"The gold which I fabricated was, as I said before, of an invariable size, namely, a little ingot worth perhaps thirty or forty-five dollars. In two years I calculated that I had made five hundred of these ingots, which, rated at an average of thirty dollars apiece, would amount to the gross sum of fifteen thousand dollars. After deducting our slight expenses for two years, we ought to have had nearly fourteen thousand dollars left. It was time, I thought, to indemnify myself for my years of suffering, and surround my child and myself with such moderate comforts as our means allowed. I went to my daughter and explained to her that I desired to make an encroachment upon our little hoard. To my utter amazement, she burst into tears, and told me that she had not got a dollar—that all of our wealth had been stolen from her. Almost overwhelmed by this new misfortune, I in vain endeavored to discover from her in what manner our savings had been plundered. She could afford me no explanation beyond what I might gather from an abundance of sobs and a copious flow of tears.

"It was a bitter blow, doctor, but *nil desperandum* was my motto, so I went to work at my crucible again, with redoubled energy, and made an ingot nearly every second day. I determined this time to put them in some secure place myself; but the very first day I set my apparatus in order for the projection, the girl Marion—that is my daughter's name—came weeping to me and implored me to allow her to take care of our treasure. I refused decisively, saying that, having found her already incapable of filling the trust, I could place no faith in her again. But she persisted, clung to my neck, threatened to abandon me; in short, used so many of the bad but irresistible arguments known to women that I had not the heart to refuse her. She has since that time continued to take the ingots.

"Yet you behold," continued the old alchemist, casting an inexpressibly mournful glance around the wretched apartment, "the way we live. Our food is insufficient and of bad quality; we never buy clothes; the rent of this hole is a mere nothing. What am I to think of the wretched girl who plunges me into this misery? Is she a miser, think you?—or a female gamester?—or—or—does she squander it riotously in places I know not of? O Doctor, Doctor! do not blame me if I heap imprecations on her head, for I have suffered bitterly!" The poor man here closed his eyes and sank back groaning on his bed.

This singular narrative excited in me the strangest emotions. I glanced at the girl Marion, who had been a patient listener to these horrible accusations of cupidity, and never did I behold a more angelic air of resignation than beamed over her countenance. It was impossible that anyone with those pure, limpid eyes; that calm, broad forehead; that childlike mouth, could be such a monster of avarice or deceit as the old man represented. The truth was plain enough: the alchemist was mad—what alchemist was there ever who was not?—and his insanity had taken this terrible shape. I felt an inexpressible pity move my heart for this poor girl, whose youth was burdened with such an awful sorrow.

"What is your name?" I asked the old man, taking his tremulous, fevered hand in mine.

"William Blakelock," he answered. "I come of an old Saxon stock, sir, that bred true men and women in former days. God! how did it ever come to pass that such a one as that girl ever sprung from our line?" The glance of loathing and contempt that he cast at her made me shudder.

"May you not be mistaken in your daughter?" I said, very mildly. "Delusions with regard to alchemy are, or have been, very common——"

"What, sir?" cried the old man, bounding in his bed. "What? Do you doubt that gold can be made? Do you know, sir, that M. C. Théodore Tiffereau made gold at Paris in the year 1854 in the presence of M. Levol, the assayer of the Imperial Mint, and the result of the experiments was read before the Academy of Sciences on the sixteenth of October of the same year? But stay; you shall have better proof yet. I will pay you with one of my ingots, and you shall attend me until I am well. Get me an ingot!"

This last command was addressed to Marion, who was still kneeling close to her father's bedside. I observed her with some curiosity as this mandate was issued. She became very pale, clasped her hands convulsively, but neither moved nor made any reply.

"Get me an ingot, I say!" reiterated the alchemist passionately.

She fixed her large eyes imploringly upon him. Her lips quivered, and two huge tears rolled slowly down her white cheeks.

"Obey me, wretched girl," cried the old man in an agitated voice, "or I swear, by all that I reverence in heaven and earth, that I will lay my curse upon you forever!"

I felt for an instant that I ought perhaps to interfere, and spare the girl the anguish that she was so evidently suffering; but a powerful curiosity to see how this strange scene would terminate withheld me.

The last threat of her father, uttered as it was with a

terrible vehemence, seemed to appall Marion. She rose with a sudden leap, as if a serpent had stung her, and, rushing into an inner apartment, returned with a small object which she placed in my hand, and then flung herself in a chair in a distant corner of the room, weeping bitterly.

"You see—you see," said the old man sarcastically, "how reluctantly she parts with it. Take it, sir; it is yours."

It was a small bar of metal. I examined it carefully, poised it in my hand—the color, weight, everything, announced that it really was gold.

"You doubt its genuineness, perhaps," continued the alchemist. "There are acids on yonder table—test it."

I confess that I *did* doubt its genuineness; but after I had acted upon the old man's suggestion, all further suspicion was rendered impossible. It was gold of the highest purity. I was astounded. Was then, after all, this man's tale a truth? Was his daughter, that fair, angelic-looking creature, a demon of avarice, or a slave to worse passions? I felt bewildered. I had never met with anything so incomprehensible. I looked from father to daughter in the blankest amazement. I suppose that my countenance betrayed my astonishment, for the old man said: "I perceive that you are surprised. Well, that is natural. You had a right to think me mad until I proved myself sane."

"But, Mr. Blakelock," I said, "I really cannot take this gold. I have no right to it. I cannot in justice charge so large a fee."

"Take it—take it," he answered impatiently; "your fee will amount to that before I am well. Besides," he added mysteriously, "I wish to secure your friendship. I wish that you should protect me from her," and he pointed his poor, bandaged hand at Marion.

My eyes followed his gesture, and I caught the glance that replied—a glance of horror, distrust, despair. The beautiful face was distorted into positive ugliness.

"It's all true," I thought; "she is the demon that her father represents her."

I now rose to go. This domestic tragedy sickened me. This treachery of blood against blood was too horrible to witness. I wrote a prescription for the old man, left directions as to the renewal of the dressings upon his burns, and, bidding him good night, hastened toward the door.

While I was fumbling on the dark, crazy landing for the staircase, I felt a hand laid on my arm.

"Doctor," whispered a voice that I recognized as Marion Blakelock's, "Doctor, have you any compassion in your heart?"

"I hope so," I answered shortly, shaking off her hand; her touch filled me with loathing.

"Hush! don't talk so loud. If you have any pity in your nature, give me back, I entreat of you, that gold ingot which my father gave you this evening."

"Great heaven!" said I, "can it be possible that so fair a woman can be such a mercenary, shameless wretch?"

"Ah! you know not—I cannot tell you! Do not judge me harshly. I call God to witness that I am not what you deem me. Some day or other you will know. But," she added, interrupting herself, "the ingot—where is it? I must have it. My life depends on your giving it to me."

"Take it, impostor!" I cried, placing it in her hand, that closed on it with a horrible eagerness. "I never intended to keep it. Gold made under the same roof that covers such as you must be accursed."

So saying, heedless of the nervous effort she made to detain me, I stumbled down the stairs and walked hastily home.

The next morning, while I was in my office, smoking my matutinal cigar, and speculating over the singular character of my acquaintances of last night, the door opened, and Marion Blakelock entered. She had the same look of terror that I had observed the evening before, and she panted as if she had been running fast.

"Father has got out of bed," she gasped out, "and insists on going on with his alchemy. Will it kill him?"

"Not exactly," I answered coldly. "It were better that he kept quiet, so as to avoid the chance of inflammation. However, you need not be alarmed; his burns are not at all dangerous, although painful."

"Thank God! thank God!" she cried, in the most impassioned accents; and, before I was aware of what she was doing, she seized my hand and kissed it.

"There, that will do," I said, withdrawing my hand; "you are under no obligations to me. You had better go back to your father."

"I can't go," she answered. "You despise me—is it not so?"

I made no reply.

"You think me a monster—a criminal. When you went home last night, you were wonderstruck that so vile a creature as I should have so fair a face."

"You embarrass me, madam," I said, in a most chilling tone. "Pray relieve me from this unpleasant position."

"Wait. I cannot bear that you should think ill of me. You are good and kind, and I desire to possess your esteem. You little know how I love my father."

I could not restrain a bitter smile.

"You do not believe that? Well, I will convince you. I have had a hard struggle all last night with myself, but am now resolved. This life of deceit must continue no longer. Will you hear my vindication?"

I assented. The wonderful melody of her voice and the purity of her features were charming me once more. I half believed in her innocence already.

"My father has told you a portion of his history. But he did not tell you that his continued failures in his search after the secret of metallic transmutation nearly killed him. Two years ago he was on the verge of the grave, working every day at his mad pursuit, and every day growing weaker and more emaciated. I saw that if his mind was not relieved in some way he would die. The thought was madness to me, for I loved him—I love him still, as a daughter never loved a father before. During all these years of

poverty I had supported the house with my needle; it was hard work, but I did it—I do it still!"

"What?" I cried, startled, "does not——"

"Patience. Hear me out. My father was dying of disappointment. I must save him. By incredible exertions, working night and day, I saved about thirty-five dollars in notes. These I exchanged for gold, and one day, when my father was not looking, I cast them into the crucible in which he was making one of his vain attempts at transmutation. God, I am sure, will pardon the deception. I never anticipated the misery it would lead to.

"I never beheld anything like the joy of my poor father, when, after emptying his crucible, he found a deposit of pure gold at the bottom. He wept, and danced, and sang, and built such castles in the air, that my brain was dizzy to hear him. He gave me the ingot to keep, and went to work at his alchemy with renewed vigor. The same thing occurred. He always found the same quantity of gold in his crucible. I alone knew the secret. He was happy, poor man, for nearly two years, in the belief that he was amassing a fortune. I all the while plied my needle for our daily bread. When he asked me for the savings, the first stroke fell upon me. Then it was that I recognized the folly of my conduct. I could give him no money. I never had any —while he believed that I had fourteen thousand dollars. My heart was nearly broken when I found that he had conceived the most injurious suspicions against me. Yet I could not blame him. I could give no account of the treasure I had permitted him to believe was in my possession. I must suffer the penalty of my fault, for to undeceive him would be, I felt, to kill him. I remained silent then, and suffered.

"You know the rest. You now know why it was that I was reluctant to give you that ingot—why it was that I degraded myself so far as to ask it back. It was the only means I had of continuing a deception on which I believed my father's life depended. But that delusion has been dispelled. I can live this life of hypocrisy no longer. I can-

not exist and hear my father, whom I love so, wither me daily with his curses. I will undeceive him this very day. Will you come with me, for I fear the effect on his enfeebled frame?"

"Willingly," I answered, taking her by the hand; "and I think that no absolute danger need be apprehended. Now, Marion," I added, "let me ask forgiveness for having even for a moment wounded so noble a heart. You are truly as great a martyr as any of those whose sufferings the Church perpetuates in altar-pieces."

"I knew you would do me justice when you knew all," she sobbed, pressing my hand; "but come. I am on fire. Let us hasten to my father, and break this terror to him."

When we reached the old alchemist's room, we found him busily engaged over a crucible which was placed on a small furnace, and in which some indescribable mixture was boiling. He looked up as we entered.

"No fear of me, doctor," he said, with a ghastly smile, "no fear; I must not allow a little physical pain to interrupt my great work, you know. By the way, you are just in time. In a few moments the marriage of the Red King and White Queen will be accomplished, as George Ripley calls the great act, in his book entitled 'The Twelve Gates.' Yes, doctor, in less than ten minutes you will see me make pure, red, shining gold!" And the poor old man smiled triumphantly, and stirred his foolish mixture with a long rod, which he held with difficulty in his bandaged hands. It was a grievous sight for a man of any feeling to witness.

"Father," said Marion, in a low, broken voice, advancing a little toward the poor old dupe, "I want your forgiveness."

"Ah, hypocrite! for what? Are you going to give me back my gold?"

"No, father, but for the deception that I have been practicing on you for two years——"

"I knew it! I knew it!" shouted the old man, with a radiant countenance. "She has concealed my fourteen

thousand dollars all this time, and now comes to restore them. I will forgive her. Where are they, Marion?"

"Father—it must come out. You never made any gold. It was I who saved up thirty-five dollars, and I used to slip them into your crucible when your back was turned—and I did it only because I saw that you were dying of disappointment. It was wrong, I know—but, father, I meant well. You'll forgive me, won't you?" And the poor girl advanced a step toward the alchemist.

He grew deathly pale, and staggered as if about to fall. The next instant, though, he recovered himself, and burst into a horrible sardonic laugh. Then he said, in tones full of the bitterest irony: "A conspiracy, is it? Well done, doctor! You think to reconcile me with this wretched girl by trumping up this story that I have been for two years a dupe of her filial piety. It's clumsy, doctor, and is a total failure. Try again."

"But I assure you, Mr. Blakelock," I said as earnestly as I could, "I believe your daughter's statement to be perfectly true. You will find it to be so, as she has got the ingot in her possession which so often deceived you into the belief that you made gold, and you will certainly find that no transmutation has taken place in your crucible."

"Doctor," said the old man, in tones of the most settled conviction, "you are a fool. The girl has wheedled you. In less than a minute I will turn you out a piece of gold purer than any the earth produces. Will that convince you?"

"That will convince me," I answered. By a gesture I imposed silence on Marion, who was about to speak. I thought it better to allow the old man to be his own undeceiver—and we awaited the coming crisis.

The old man, still smiling with anticipated triumph, kept bending eagerly over his crucible, stirring the mixture with his rod, and muttering to himself all the time. "Now," I heard him say, "it changes. There—there's the scum. And now the green and bronze shades flit across it. Oh, the beautiful green! the precursor of the golden-red hue

that tells of the end attained! Ah! now the golden-red is coming—slowly—slowly! It deepens, it shines, it is dazzling! Ah, I have it!" So saying, he caught up his crucible in a chemist's tongs, and bore it slowly toward the table on which stood a brass vessel.

"Now, incredulous doctor!" he cried, "come and be convinced," and immediately began carefully pouring the contents of the crucible into the brass vessel. When the crucible was quite empty he turned it up and called me again. "Come, doctor, come and be convinced. See for yourself."

"See first if there is any gold in your crucible," I answered, without moving.

He laughed, shook his head derisively, and looked into the crucible. In a moment he grew pale as death.

"Nothing!" he cried. "Oh, a jest, a jest! There must be gold somewhere. Marion!"

"The gold is here, father," said Marion, drawing the ingot from her pocket; "it is all we ever had."

"Ah!" shrieked the poor old man, as he let the empty crucible fall, and staggered toward the ingot which Marion held out to him. He made three steps, and then fell on his face. Marion rushed toward him, and tried to lift him, but could not. I put her aside gently, and placed my hand on his heart.

"Marion," said I, "it is perhaps better as it is. He is dead!"

The Bohemian

I WAS launched into the world when I reached twenty-one, at which epoch I found myself in possession of health, strength, physical beauty, and boundless ambition. I was poor. My father had been an unsuccessful operator in Wall Street—had passed through the various vicissitudes of fortune common to his profession, and ended by being

left a widower, with barely enough to live upon and to give me a collegiate education. As I was aware of the strenuous exertions he had made to accomplish this last, how he had pinched himself in a thousand ways to endow me with intellectual capital, I immediately felt, on leaving college, the necessity of burdening him no longer. The desire for riches entirely possessed me. I had no dream but wealth. Like those poor wretches so lately starving on the Darien Isthmus, who used to beguile their hunger with imaginary banquets, I consoled my pangs of present poverty with visions of boundless treasure.

A friend of mine, who was paying teller in one of our New York banks, once took me into the vaults when he was engaged in depositing his specie, and as I beheld the golden coins falling in yellow streams from his hands, a strange madness seemed to possess me. I became from that moment a prey to a morbid disorder, which, if we had a psychological pathology, might be classed as the *mania aurabilis.* I literally saw gold—nothing but gold. Walking in the country my eyes involuntarily sought the ground, as if hoping to pierce the sod and discover some hidden treasure. Coming home late at night, through the silent New York streets, every stray piece of mud or loose fragment of paper that lay upon the sidewalk was carefully scanned; for, in spite of my better reason, I cherished the vague hope that some time or other I should light upon a splendid treasure, which, for want of a better claimant, would remain mine. It seemed, in short, as if one of those gold gnomes of the Hartz Mountains had taken possession of me and ruled me like a master. I dreamed such dreams as would cast Sindbad's valley of diamonds into the shade. The very sunlight itself never shone upon me but the wish crossed my brain that I could solidify its splendid beams and coin them into "eagles."

I was by profession a lawyer. Like the rest of my fraternity I had my little office, a small room on the fourth story in Nassau Street, with magnificent painted tin labels announcing my rank and title all the way up the stairs.

Despite the fact that I had many of these labels fixed to the walls, and in every available corner, my legal threshold was virgin. No client gladdened my sight. Many and many a time my heart beat as I heard heavy footsteps ascending the stairs, but the half-dawning hope of employment was speedily crushed. They always stopped on the floor below, where a disgusting conveyancer, with a large practice, had put up his shingle. So I passed day after day alone with my Code and Blackstone, and my Chitty, writing articles for the magazines on legal-looking paper—so that in case a client entered he might imagine I was engaged at my profession—by which I earned a scanty and precarious subsistence.

I was, of course, at this period in love. That a young man should be very ambitious, very poor, and very unhappy, and not in love, would be too glaring a contradiction of the usual course of worldly destinies. I was, therefore, entirely and hopelessly in love. My life was divided between two passions—the desire of becoming wealthy, and my love for Annie Deane.

Annie was an author's daughter. Need I add, after this statement, that she was as poor as myself? This was the only point in my theory of the conquest of wealth on which I contradicted myself. To be consistent, I should have devoted myself to some of those young ladies, about whom it is whispered, before you are introduced, that "she will have a hundred and fifty thousand dollars." But though I had made up my mind to devote my life to the acquisition of wealth, and though I verily believe I might have parted with my soul for the same end, I had yet too much of the natural man in my composition to sacrifice my heart.

Annie Deane was, however, such a girl as to make this infraction of my theory of life less remarkable. She was, indeed, marvelously beautiful. Not of that insipid style of beauty which one sees in Greek statues and London annuals. Her nose did *not* form a grand line with her forehead. Her mouth would scarcely have been claimed

by Cupid as his bow; but then, her upper lip was so short, and the teeth within so pearly, the brow was so white and full, and the throat so round, slender, and pliant! and when, above all this, a pair of wondrous dark-gray eyes reigned in supreme and tender beauty, I felt that a portion of the wealth of my life had already been acquired, in gaining the love of Annie Deane.

Our love affair ran as smoothly as if the old adage never existed; probably for the reason that there was no goal in sight, for we were altogether too poor to dream of marriage as yet, and there did not seem very much probability of my achieving the success necessary to the fulfillment of our schemes. Annie's constitutional delicacy, however, was a source of some uneasiness to me. She evidently possessed a very highly strung nervous organization, and was to the extremest degree what might be termed impressionable. The slightest change in the weather affected her strangely. Certain atmospheres appeared to possess an influence over her for better or for worse; but it was in connection with social instincts, so to speak, that the peculiarities of her organism were so strikingly developed. These instincts, for I cannot call them anything else, guided her altogether in her choice of acquaintance. She was accustomed to declare that, by merely touching a person's hand, she became conscious of liking or aversion. Upon the entrance of certain persons into a room where she was, even if she had never seen them before, her frame would shrink and shiver like a dying flower, and she would not recover until they had left the apartment. For these strange affections she could not herself account, and they on more than one occasion were the source of very bitter annoyances to herself and her parents.

Well, things were in this state when one day, in the early part of June, I was sitting alone in my little office. The beginning of a story which I was writing lay upon the table. The title was elaborately at the top of the page, but it seemed as if I had stuck in the middle of the second

paragraph. In the first—for it was an historical tale after the most approved model—I had described the month, the time of day, and the setting sun. In the second, I introduced my three horsemen, who were riding slowly down a hill. The nose of the first and elder horseman, however, upset me. I could not for the life of me determine whether it was to be aquiline or Roman.

While I was debating this important point, and swaying between a multitude of suggestions, there came a sharp, decisive knock at my door. I think, if the knock had come upon the nose about which I was thinking, or on my own, I should scarcely have been more surprised. "A client!" I cried to myself. "Huzza! the gods have at last laid on a pipe from Pactolus for my especial benefit." In reality, between ourselves, I did not say anything half so good; but the exclamation, as I have written it, will convey some idea of the vague exultation that filled my soul when I heard that knock.

"Come in!" I cried, when I had reached down a Chitty and concealed my story under a second-hand brief which I had borrowed from a friend in the profession. "Come in!" and I arranged myself in a studious and absorbed attitude.

The door opened and my visitor entered. I had a sort of instinct that he was no client from the first moment. Rich men—and who but a rich man goes to law—may sometimes be seedy in their attire, but it is always a peculiar and respectable seediness. The air of wealth is visible, I know not by what magic, beneath the most threadbare coat. You see at a glance that the man who wears it might, if he chose, be clad in fine linen. The seediness of the poor man is, on the other hand, equally unmistakable. You seem to discern instantly that his coat is poor from necessity. My visitor, it was easy to perceive, was of this latter class. My hopes of profit sank at the sight of his pale, unshaven face, his old, shapeless boots, his shabby Kossuth hat, his overcoat shining with long wear, which,

though buttoned, I could see no longer merited its name, for it was plain that no other coat lurked beneath it. Withal, this man had an air of conscious power as he entered. You could see that he had nothing in his pockets, but then he looked as if he had much in his brain.

He saluted me with a sort of careless respect as he entered. I bowed in return, and offered him the other chair. I had but two.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" I inquired blandly, still clinging to the hope of clientage.

"Yes," said he shortly; "I never make purposeless visits."

"Hem! If you will be so kind as to state your case"—for his rudeness rather shook my faith in his poverty—"I will give it my best attention."

"I've no doubt of that, Mr. Cranstoun," he replied, "for you are as much interested in it as I am."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, not without some surprise and much interest at this sudden disclosure. "To whom have I the honor of speaking, then?"

"My name is Philip Brann."

"Brann? Brann? A resident of this city?"

"No. I am by birth an Englishman, but I never reside anywhere."

"Oh, you are a commercial agent, then, perhaps?"

"I am a Bohemian."

"A what?"

"A Bohemian," he repeated, coolly removing the papers with which I had concealed my magazine story, and glancing over the commencement. "You see my habits are easy."

"I see it perfectly, sir," I answered.

"When I say that I am a Bohemian, I do not wish you to understand that I am a Zingaro. I don't steal chickens, tell fortunes, or live in a camp. I am a social Bohemian, and fly at higher game."

"But what has all this got to do with me?" I asked

sharply; for I was not a little provoked at the disappointment I experienced in the fellow's not having turned out to be a client.

"Much. It is necessary that you should know something about me before you do that which you will do."

"Oh, I am to do something, then?"

"Certainly. Have you read Henri Murger's *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, you can comprehend my life. I am clever, learned, witty, and tolerably good-looking. I can write brilliant magazine articles"—here his eye rested contemptuously on my historical tale—"I can paint pictures, and, what is more, sell the pictures I paint. I can compose songs, make comedies, and captivate women."

"On my word, sir, you have a choice of professions," I said, sarcastically; for the scorn with which the Bohemian had eyed my story offended me.

"That's it," he answered; "I don't want a profession. I could make plenty of money if I chose to work, but I don't choose to work. I will never work. I have a contempt for labor."

"Probably you despise money equally," I replied, with a sneer.

"No, I don't. To acquire money without trouble is the great object of my life, as to acquire it in any way is the great object of yours."

"And pray, sir, how do you know that I have any such object?" I asked in a haughty tone.

"Oh, I know it. You dream only of wealth. You intend to try and obtain it by industry. You will never succeed."

"Your prophecies, sir, are more dogmatical than pleasant."

"Don't be angry," he replied, smiling at my frowns. "You shall be wealthy. We will follow it together!"

The sublime assurance of this man astounded me. His glance, penetrating and vivid, seemed to pierce into my very

heart. A strange and uncontrollable interest in him and his plans filled my heart. I burned to know more.

"What is your proposal?" I asked severely; for a thought at the moment flashed across me that some unlawful scheme might be the aim of this singular being.

"You need not be alarmed," he answered, as if reading my thoughts. "The road I wish to lead you is an honest one. I am too wise a man ever to become a criminal."

"Then, Mr. Philip Brann, if you will explain your plans I shall feel more assured on that point."

"Well, in the first place," he began, crossing his legs and taking a cigar out of a bundle that lay in one of the pigeon holes of my desk, "in the first place, you must introduce me to the young lady to whom you are engaged, Miss Annie Deane."

"Sir!" I exclaimed, starting to my feet, and quivering with indignation at such a proposal; "what do you mean? Do you think it likely that I would introduce to a young lady in whom I am interested a man whom I never saw before to-day, and who has voluntarily confessed to being a vagabond? Sir, in spite of your universal acquirements, I think Providence forgot to endow you with sense."

"I'll trouble you for one of those matches. Thank you. So you refuse to introduce me! I knew you would. But I also know that ten minutes from this time you will be very glad to do it. Look at my eyes!"

The oddity of this request, and the calm assurance with which it was made, were too much for me. In spite of my anger, I burst into a fit of loud laughter. He waited patiently until my mirth had subsided.

"You need not laugh," he resumed; "I am perfectly serious. Look at my eyes attentively, and tell me if you see anything strange in them."

At such a proposition from any other man, I should have taken for granted that he was mocking me, and kicked him downstairs. This Bohemian, however, had an earnestness of manner that staggered me. I became serious, and I did look at his eyes.

They were certainly very singular eyes—the most singular eyes that I had ever beheld. They were long, gray, and of a very deep hue. Their steadiness was wonderful. They never moved. One might fancy that they were gazing into the depths of one of those Italian lakes, on an evening when the waters are so calm as to seem solid. But it was the interior of these organs—if I may so speak—that was so marvelous. As I gazed, I seemed to behold strange things passing in the deep gray distance which seemed to stretch infinitely away. I could have sworn that I saw figures moving, and landscapes wonderfully real. My gaze seemed to be fastened to his by some inscrutable power; and the outer world, gradually passing off like a cloud, left me literally living in that phantom region which I beheld in those mysterious eyes.

I was aroused from this curious lethargy by the Bohemian's voice. It seemed to me at first as if muffled by distance, and sounded drowsily in my ear. I made a powerful effort and recalled my senses, which seemed to be wandering in some far-off place.

"You are more easily affected than I imagined," remarked Brann, as I stared heavily at him with a half-stupefied air.

"What have you done? What is this lethargy that I feel upon me?" I stammered out.

"Ah! you believe now," replied Brann coldly; "I thought you would. Did you observe nothing strange in my eyes?"

"Yes. I saw landscapes, and figures, and many strange things. I almost thought I could distinguish Miss—Miss—Deane!"

"Well, it is not improbable. People can behold whatever they wish in my eyes."

"But will you not explain? I no longer doubt the fact that you are possessed of extraordinary powers, but I must know more of you. Why do you wish to be introduced to Miss Deane?"

"Listen to me, Cranstoun," answered the Bohemian,

placing his hand on my shoulder; "I do not wish you to enter into any blindfold compact. I will explain all my views to you; for, though I have learned to trust no man, I know you cannot avail yourself of any information I may give you without my assistance."

"So much the better," said I; "for then you will not suspect me."

"As you have seen," continued the Bohemian, "I possess some remarkable powers. The origin, the causes of these endowments, I do not care to investigate. The scientific men of France and Germany have wearied themselves in reducing the psychological phenomena of which I am a practical illustration to a system. They have failed. An arbitrary nomenclature, and a few interesting and suggestive experiments made by Reichenbach, are all the results of years of the intellectual toil of our greatest minds. As you will have guessed by this time, I am what is vulgarly called 'a mesmerist.' I can throw people into trances, deaden the nervous susceptibilities, and do a thousand things by which, if I chose to turn exhibitor, I could realize a fortune. But, while possessing those qualities which exhibit a commonplace superiority of psychical force, and which are generally to be found in men of a highly sympathetic organization, I yet can boast of unique powers such as I have never known to be granted to another being besides myself. What these powers are I have now no need to inform you. You will very soon behold them practically illustrated.

"Now, to come to my object. Like you, I am ambitious; but I have, unlike you, a constitutional objection to labor. It is sacrilege to expect men with minds like yours and mine to work. Why should we—who are expressly and evidently created by nature to enjoy—why should we, with our delicate tastes, our refined susceptibilities, our highly wrought organizations, spend our lives in ministering to the enjoyment of others? In short, my friend, I do not wish to row the boat in the great voyage of life. I prefer sitting at the stern, with purple awnings

and ivory couches around me, and my hand upon the golden helm. I wish to achieve fortune at a single stroke. With your assistance I can do it. You will join me!"

"Under certain conditions."

I was not yet entirely carried away by the earnest eloquence of this strange being.

"I will grant what conditions you like," he continued fervently. "Above all, I will set your mind at rest by swearing to you, whatever may be my power, never in any way to interfere between you and the young girl whom you love. I will respect her as I would a sister."

This last promise cleared away many of my doubts. The history which this man gave of himself, and the calm manner with which he asserted his wondrous power over women, I confess, rendered me somewhat cautious about introducing him to Annie. His air was, however, now so frank and manly, he seemed to be so entirely absorbed by his one idea of wealth, that I had no hesitation in declaring to him that I accepted his strange proposals.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You are, I see, a man of resolution. We shall succeed. I will now let you into my plans. Your *fiancée*, Miss Annie Deane, is a *clairvoyante* of the first water. I saw her the other day at the Academy of Design. I stood near her as she examined a picture, and my physiognomical and psychological knowledge enabled me to ascertain beyond a doubt that her organization was the most nervous and sympathetic I had ever met. It is to her pure and piercing instincts that we shall owe our success."

Without regarding my gestures of astonishment and alarm, he continued:

"You must know that this so-called science of mesmerism is in its infancy. Its professors are, for the most part, incapables; its pupils, credulous fools. As a proof of this, endeavor to recall, if you can, any authentic instance in which this science has been put to any practical use. Have these mesmeric professors and their instruments ever been able to predict or foresee the rise of

stocks, the course of political events, the approaches of disaster? Never, my friend, save in the novels of Alexandre Dumas and Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton. The reason of this is very simple. The professors were limited in their power, and the *somnambules* limited in their susceptibilities. When two such people as Miss Deane and myself labor together, everything is possible!"

"Oh, I see! You propose to operate in the stocks. My dear sir, you are mad. Where is the money?"

"Bah! who said anything about operating in stocks? That involves labor and an office. I can afford neither. No, Cranstoun, we will take a shorter road to wealth than that. A few hours' exertion is all we need to make us *millionnaires*."

"For heaven's sake explain! I am wearied with curiosity deferred."

"It is thus. This island and its vicinity abound in concealed treasure. Much was deposited by the early Dutch settlers during their wars with the Indians. Captain Kidd and other buccaneers have made numberless *cachés* containing their splendid spoils, which a violent death prevented their ever reclaiming. Poor Poe, you know, who was a Bohemian, like myself, made a story on the tradition, but, poor fellow! *he* only dug up his treasure on paper. There was also a considerable quantity of plate, jewels, and coin concealed by the inhabitants of New York and the neighborhood during the war with England. You may wonder at my asserting this so confidently. Let it suffice for you that I know it to be so. It is my intention to discover some of this treasure."

Having calmly made this announcement, he folded his arms and gazed at me with the air of a god prepared to receive the ovations of his worshipers.

"How is this to be accomplished?" I inquired earnestly, for I had begun to put implicit faith in this man, who seemed equally gifted and audacious.

"There are two ways by which we can arrive at our desires. The first is by the command of that power com-

mon to *somnambules*, who, having their faculties concentrated on a certain object during the magnetic trance, become possessed of the power of inwardly beholding and verbally describing it, as well as the locality where it is situated. The other is peculiar to myself, and, as you have seen, consists in rendering my eyes a species of camera-obscura to the *clairvoyante*, in which she vividly perceives all that we would desire. This mode I have greater faith in than in any other, and I believe that our success will be found there."

"How is it," I inquired, "that you have not before put this wondrous power to a like use? Why did you not enrich yourself long since through this means?"

"Because I have never been able to find a *somnambule* sufficiently impressionable to be reliable in her evidence. I have tried many, but they have all deceived me. You confess to having beheld certain shadowy forms in my eyes, but you could not define them distinctly. The reason is simply that your magnetic organization is not perfect. This faculty of mine, which has so much astonished you, is nothing new. It is employed by the Egyptians, who use a small glass mirror where I use my eyes. M. Leon Laborde, who practiced the art himself, Lord Prudhoe, and a host of other witnesses, have recorded their experience of the truth of the science which I preach. However, I need discourse no further on it. I will prove to you its verity. Now that you have questioned me sufficiently, will you introduce me to your lady-love, Mr. Henry Cranstoun?"

"And will you promise me, Mr. Philip Brann, on your honor as a man, that you will respect my relations with that lady?"

"I promise, upon my honor."

"Then I yield. When shall it be?"

"To-night. I hate delays."

"This evening, then, I will meet you at the Astor House, and we will go together to Mr. Deane's house."

That night, accompanied by my new friend, the Bo-

hemian, I knocked at the door of Mr. Deane's house, in Amity Place. A modest neighborhood, fit for a man who earned his living by writing novels for cheap publishers, and correspondence for Sunday newspapers. Annie was, as usual, in the sitting-room on the first floor, and the lamps had not yet been lighted, so that the apartment seemed filled with a dull gloom as we entered.

"Annie dear," said I, as she ran to meet me, "let me present to you my particular friend, Mr. Philip Brann, whom I have brought with me for a special purpose, which I will presently explain."

She did not reply.

Piqued by this strange silence, and feeling distressed about the Bohemian, who stood calmly upright, with a faint smile on his lips, I repeated my introduction rather sharply.

"Annie," I reiterated, "you could not have heard me. I am anxious to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Brann."

"I heard you," she answered, in a low voice, catching at my coat as if to support herself, "but I feel very ill."

"Good heavens! what's the matter, darling? Let me get you a glass of wine or water."

"Do not be alarmed," said the Bohemian, arresting my meditated rush to the door, "I understand Miss Deane's indisposition thoroughly. If she will permit me, I will relieve her at once."

A low murmur of assent seemed to break involuntarily from Annie's lips. The Bohemian led her calmly to an armchair near the window, held her hands in his for a few moments, and spoke a few words to her in a low tone. In less than a minute she declared herself quite recovered.

"It was you who caused my illness," she said to him, in a tone whose vivacity contrasted strangely with her previous languor. "I felt your presence in the room like a terrible electric shock."

"And I have cured what I caused," answered the Bohemian; "you are very sensitive to magnetic impressions. So much the better."

"Why so much the better?" she asked anxiously.

"Mr. Cranstoun will explain," replied Brann carelessly; and, with a slight bow, he moved to another part of the dusky room, leaving Annie and myself together.

"Who is this Mr. Brann, Henry?" asked Annie, as soon as the Bohemian was out of earshot. "His presence affects me strangely."

"He is a strange person, who possesses wonderful powers," I answered; "he is going to be of great service to us, Annie."

"Indeed! how so?"

I then related to her what had passed between the Bohemian and myself at my office, and explained his object in coming hither this evening. I painted in glowing colors the magnificent future that opened for her and myself if this scheme should prove successful, and ended by entreating her, for my sake, to afford the Bohemian every facility for arriving at the goal of his desires.

As I finished, I discovered that Annie was trembling violently. I caught her hand in mine. It was icy cold, and quivered with a sort of agitated and intermittent tremor.

"O Henry!" she exclaimed, "I feel a singular presentiment that seems to warn me against this thing. Let us rest content in our poverty. Have a true heart, and learn to labor and to wait. You will be rich in time; and then we will live happily together, secure in the consciousness that our means have been acquired by honest industry. I fear those secret treasure seekings."

"What nonsense!" I cried; "those are a timid girl's fears. It would be folly to pine patiently for years in poverty, when we can achieve wealth at a stroke. The sooner we are rich the sooner we shall be united, and to postpone that moment would be to make me almost doubt your love. Let us try this man's power. There will be nothing lost if he fails."

"Do with me as you will, Henry," she answered; "I will obey you in all things; only I cannot help feeling a vague terror that seems to forebode misfortune."

I laughed and bade her be of good cheer, and rang for lights in order that the experiment might be commenced at once. We three were alone. Mrs. Deane was on a visit at Philadelphia; Mr. Deane was occupied with his literary labors in another room, so that we had everything necessary to insure the quiet which the Bohemian insisted should reign during his experiments.

The Bohemian did not magnetize in the common way, with passes and manipulations. He sat a little in the shade, with his back to the strong glare of the chandeliers, while Annie sat opposite to him, looking full in his face. I sat at a little distance, at a small table, with a pencil and notebook, with which I was preparing to register such revelations as our *clairvoyante* should make.

The Bohemian commenced operations by engaging Miss Deane in a light and desultory conversation. He seemed conversant with all the topics of the town, and talked of the opera, and the annual exhibition at the Academy of Design, as glibly as if he had never done anything but cultivate small talk. Imperceptibly but rapidly, however, he gradually led the conversation to money matters. From these he glided into a dissertation on the advantages of wealth, touched on the topic of celebrated misers, thence slid smoothly into a discourse on concealed treasures, about which he spoke in so eloquent and impressive a manner as to completely fascinate both his hearers.

Then it was that I observed a singular change take place in Annie Deane's countenance. Hitherto pale and somewhat listless, as if suffering from mental depression, she suddenly became illumined as if by an inward fire. A rosy flush mounted to her white cheeks; her lips, eagerly parted as if drinking in some intoxicating atmosphere, were ruddy with a supernatural health, and her eyes dilated as they gazed upon the Bohemian with a piercing intensity.

The latter ceased to speak, and after a moment's silence he said gently, "Miss Deane, do you see?"

"I see!" she murmured, without altering the fixity of her gaze for an instant.

"Mark well what you observe," continued the Bohemian; "describe it with all possible accuracy." Then, turning to me, he said rapidly, "Take care and note everything."

"I see," pursued Annie, speaking in a measured monotone, and gazing into the Bohemian's eyes while she waved her hand gently as if keeping time to the rhythm of her words—"I see a sad and mournful island on which the ocean beats forever. The sandy ridges are crowned with manes of bitter grass that wave and wave sorrowfully in the wind. No trees or shrubs are rooted in that salt and sterile soil. The burning breath of the Atlantic has seared the surface and made it always barren. The surf, that whitens on the shore, drifts like a shower of snow across its bleak and storm-blown plains. It is the home of the sea-gull and the crane."

"It is called Coney Island?" the Bohemian half inquired, half asserted.

"It is the name," pursued the seeress, but in so even a tone that one would scarce imagine she had heard the question. She then continued to speak as before, still keeping up that gentle oscillation of her hand, which, in spite of my reason, seemed to me to have something terrible in its monotony.

"I see the spot," she continued, "where what you love lies buried. My gaze pierces through the shifting soil until it finds the gold that burns in the gloom. And there are jewels, too, of regal size and priceless value, hidden so deeply in the barren sand! No sunlight has reached them for many years, but they burn for me as if they were set in the glory of an eternal day!"

"Describe the spot accurately!" cried the Bohemian, in a commanding tone, making for the first time a supremely imperative gesture.

"There is a spot upon that lonely island," the seeress continued, in the unimpassioned monotone that seemed more awful than the thunder of an army, "where three huge, sandy ridges meet. At the junction of these three

ridges a stake of locust wood is driven deeply down. When by the sun it is six o'clock, a shadow falls westward on the sand. Where this shadow ends, the treasure lies."

"Can you draw?" asked the Bohemian.

"She cannot," I answered hastily. The Bohemian raised his hand to enjoin silence.

"I can draw *now*," the seeress replied firmly, never for an instant removing her eyes from the Bohemian's.

"Will you draw the locality you describe, if I give you the materials?" pursued the magnetizer.

"I will."

Brann drew a sheet of Bristol-board and a pencil from his pocket, and presented them to her in silence. She took them, and, still keeping her eyes immovably fixed on those of the magnetizer, began sketching rapidly. I was thunderstruck. Annie, I knew, had never made even the rudest sketch before.

"It is done!" she said, after a few minutes' silence, handing the Bristol-board back to the Bohemian. Moved by an inexpressible curiosity, I rose and looked over his shoulder. It was wonderful! There was a masterly sketch of such a locality as she described executed on the paper. But its vividness, its desolation, its evident truth, were so singularly given that I could scarcely believe my senses. I could almost hear the storms of the Atlantic howling over the barren sands.

"There is something wanting yet," said the Bohemian, handing the sketch back to her, and smiling at my amazement.

"I know it," she remarked calmly. Then, giving a few rapid strokes with her pencil, she handed it to him once more.

The points of the compass had been added in the upper right-hand corner of the drawing. Nothing more was needed to establish the perfect accuracy of the sketch.

"This is truly wonderful!" I could not help exclaiming.

"It is finished," cried the Bohemian exultingly, and

dashing his handkerchief two or three times across Annie's face. Under this new influence her countenance underwent a rapid change. Her eyes, a moment before dilated to their utmost capabilities, now suddenly became dull, and the eyelids dropped heavily over them. Her form, that during the previous scene had been rigidly erect and strung to its highest point of tension, seemed to collapse like one of those strips of gold leaf that electricians experiment with, when the subtle fluid has ceased to course through its pores. Without uttering a word, and before the Bohemian or myself could stir, she sank like a corpse on the floor.

"Wretch!" I cried, rushing forward, "what have you done?"

"Secured the object of our joint ambition," replied the fellow, with that imperturbable calmness that so distinguished him. "Do not be alarmed at this fainting fit, my friend. Exhaustion is always the consequence of such violent psychological phenomena. Miss Deane will be perfectly recovered by to-morrow evening, and by that time we shall have returned, *millionnaires*."

"I will not leave her until she is recovered," I answered sullenly, while I tried to restore the dear girl to consciousness.

"Yes, but you will," asserted Brann, lighting his cigar as coolly as if nothing very particular had happened. "By dawn to-morrow you and I will have embarked for Coney Island."

"You cold-blooded savage!" I cried passionately, "will you assist me to restore your victim to consciousness? If you do not, by heaven, I will blow your brains out!"

"With what? The fire shovel?" he answered with a laugh. Then, carelessly approaching, he took Annie's hands in his, and blew with his mouth gently upon her forehead. The effect was almost instantaneous. Her eyes gradually unclosed, and she made a feeble effort to sustain herself.

"Call the housekeeper," said the Bohemian; "have Miss

Deane conducted to bed, and by to-morrow evening all will be tranquil."

I obeyed his directions almost mechanically, little dreaming how bitterly his words would be realized. Yes, truly! All *would* be tranquil by to-morrow evening!

I sat up all night with Brann. I did not leave Mr. Deane's until a late hour, when I saw Annie apparently wrapped in a peaceful slumber, and betook myself to a low tavern that remained open all night, where the Bohemian awaited me. There we arranged our plan. We were to take a boat at the Battery, at the earliest glimpse of dawn; then, provided with a spade and shovel, a pocket compass and a valise in which to transport our treasure, we were to row down to our destination. I was feverish and troubled. The strange scene I had witnessed, and the singular adventure that awaited us, seemed in combination to have set my brain on fire. My temples throbbed; the cold perspiration stood upon my forehead, and it was in vain that I allowed myself to join the Bohemian in the huge draughts of brandy which he continually gulped down, and which seemed to produce little or no effect on his iron frame. How madly, how terribly, I longed for the dawn!

At last the hour came. We took our implements in a carriage down to the Battery, hired a boat, and in a short time were out in the stream pulling lustily down the foggy harbor. The exercise of rowing seemed to afford me some relief. I pulled madly at my oar until the sweat rolled in huge drops from my brow, and hung in trembling beads on the curls of my hair. After a long and wearisome pull, we landed on the island at the most secluded spot we could find, taking particular care that it was completely sheltered from the view of the solitary hotel, where doubtless inquisitive idlers would be found. After beaching our boat carefully, we struck toward the center of the island, Brann seeming to possess some wonderful instinct for the discovery of localities, for almost without any trouble he walked nearly straight to the spot we were in search of.

"This is the place," said he, dropping the valise which

he carried. "Here are the three ridges and the locust stake lying exactly due north. Let us see what the true time is."

So saying, he unlocked the valise and drew forth a small sextant, with which he proceeded to take an observation. I could not help admiring the genius of this man, who seemed to think of and foresee everything. After a few moments engaged in making calculations on the back of a letter, he informed me that exactly twenty-one minutes would elapse before the shadow of the locust stake would fall on the precise spot indicated by the seeress. "Just time enough," said he, "to enjoy a cigar."

Never did twenty-one minutes appear so long to a human being as these did to me. There was nothing in the landscape to arrest my attention. All was a wild waste of sand, on which a few patches of salt grass waved mournfully. My heart beat until I could hear its pulsations. A thousand times I thought that my strength must give way beneath the weight of my emotions, and that death would overtake me ere I realized my dreams. I was obliged at length to dip my handkerchief in a marshy pool that was near me, and bind it about my burning temples.

At length the shadow from the locust log fell upon the enchanted spot. Brann and myself seized the spades wildly, and dug with the fury of ghouls who were rooting up their loathsome repast. The light sand flew in heaps on all sides. The sweat rolled from our bodies. The hole grew deeper and deeper!

At last—O heavens!—a metallic sound! My spade struck some hollow, sonorous substance. My limbs fairly shook as I flung myself into the pit, and scraped the sand away with my nails. I laughed like a madman, and burrowed like a mole. The Bohemian, always calm, with a few strokes of his shovel laid bare an old iron pot with a loose lid. In an instant this was smashed with a frantic blow of my fist, and my hands were buried in a heap of shining gold! Red, glittering coins—bracelets that seemed to glow like the stars in heaven—goblets, rings, jewels, in countless profusion—flashed before my eyes for an instant

like the sparkles of an aurora. Then came a sudden darkness—and I remember no more!

How long I lay in this unconscious state I know not. It seemed to me that I was aroused by a sensation similar to that of having water poured upon me, and it was some moments before I could summon up sufficient strength to raise myself on one elbow. I looked bewilderingly around: I was alone! I then strove to remember something that I seemed to have forgotten, when my eye fell on the hole in the sand, on the edge of which I found I was lying. A dull-red gleam as of gold seemed to glimmer from out the bottom. This talismanic sight restored to me everything—my memory and my strength. I sprang to my feet: I gazed around. The Bohemian was nowhere visible. Had he fled with the treasure? My heart failed me for a moment at the thought; but, no! there lay the treasure gleaming still in the depths of the hole, with a dull-red light like the distant glare of hell. I looked at the sun; he had sunk low in the horizon, and the dews already falling had, with the damp sea air, chilled me to the bone. While I was brushing the moisture from my coat, wondering at this strange conduct of the Bohemian, my eye caught sight of a slip of paper pinned upon my sleeve. I tore it off eagerly. It contained these words:

"I leave you. I am honest, though I am selfish, and have divided with you the treasure which you have helped me to gain. You are now rich, but it may be that you will not be happy. Return to the city, but return in doubt.

"The Bohemian."

What terrible enigma was this that the last sentence of this note enshrouded? What veiled mystery was it that rose before my inward vision in shapeless horror? I knew not. I could not guess, but a foreboding of some unknown and overwhelming disaster rushed instantly upon me, and seemed to crush my soul. Was it Annie, or was it my father? One thing was certain, there was no time to be

lost in penetrating the riddle. I seized the valise which the Bohemian had charitably left me—how he bore away his own share of the treasure I know not—and poured the gold and jewels into it with trembling hands. Then, scarce able to travel with the weight of the treasure, I staggered toward the beach, where we had left the boat. She was gone. Without wasting an instant, I made my way as rapidly as I could to the distant pier, where a thin stream of white smoke informed me that the steamer for New York was waiting for the bathers. I reached her just as she was about to start, and, staggering to an obscure corner, sorrowfully sat down upon my treasure.

With what different feelings from those which I anticipated was I returning to the city. My dreams of wealth had been realized beyond my wildest hopes. All that I had thought necessary to yield me the purest happiness was mine, and yet there was not a more miserable wretch in existence. Those fatal words, "Return to the city, but return in doubt!" were ever before me. Oh, how I counted every stroke of the engine that impelled me to the city!

There was a poor, blind, humpbacked fiddler on board, who played all along the way. He played execrably, and his music made my flesh creep. As we neared the city he came round with his hat soliciting alms. In my recklessness, I tumbled all the money I had in my pockets into his hands. I never shall forget the look of joy that flashed over his poor old seared and sightless face at the touch of these few dollars. "Good heavens!" I groaned, "here I am, sitting on the wealth of a kingdom which is all mine, and dying of despair, while this old wretch has extracted from five dollars enough of happiness to make a saint envious!" Then my thoughts wandered back to Annie and the Bohemian, and there always floated before me in the air the agonizing words, "Return to the city, but return in doubt!"

The instant I reached the pier I dashed through the crowd with my valise, and, jumping into the first carriage I met, promised a liberal bounty to the driver if he would

drive me to Amity Place in the shortest possible space of time. Stimulated by this, we flew through the streets, and in a few moments I was standing at Mr. Deane's door. Even then it seemed to me as if a dark cloud hung over that house, above all others in the city. I rang, but my hand had scarcely left the bell handle when the door opened, and Dr. Lott, the family physician, appeared on the threshold. He looked grave and sad.

"We were expecting you, Mr. Cranstoun," he said, very mournfully.

"Has—has anything—happened?" I stammered, catching at the railings for support.

"Hush! come in." And the kind doctor took me by the arm and led me like a child into the parlor.

"Doctor, for heaven's sake! tell me what is the matter. I know something has happened. Is Annie dead? Oh, my brain will burst unless you end this suspense!"

"No—not dead. But tell me, Mr. Cranstoun, has Miss Deane experienced any uncommon excitement lately?"

"Yes—yes—last night!" I groaned wildly, "she was mesmerized by a wretch. Oh, fool that I was to suffer it!"

"Ah! that explains all," answered the doctor. Then he took my hand gently in his. "Prepare yourself, Mr. Cranstoun," he continued, with deep pity in his voice, "prepare yourself for a terrible shock."

"She is dead, then!" I murmured. "Is she not?"

"She is. She died this morning of overexcitement, of the cause of which I was ignorant until now. Calm yourself, my dear sir. She died blessing you."

I tore myself from his grasp and rushed upstairs. The door of her room was open, and, in spite of myself, my agitated tramp softened to a stealthy footfall as I entered. There were two figures in the room. One was an old man who knelt by the bedside of my lost love, sobbing bitterly. It was her father. The other lay upon the bed, with marble face, crossed hands, and sealed eyelids. All was tranquil and serene in the chamber of death. Even the sobbings of the father, though bitter, were muffled and subdued. And

she lay on the couch, with closed eyes, the calmest of all! Oh, the seeress now saw more than earthly science could show her!

I felt, as I knelt by her father and kissed her cold hand in the agony of my heart, that I was justly punished.

Below stairs, in the valise, lay the treasure I had gained. Here, in her grave clothes, lay the treasure I had lost.

A Terrible Night

"By Jove, Dick, I'm nearly done up!"

"So am I. Did anyone ever see such a confounded forest, Charley?"

"I am not alone weak, but hungry. Oh, for a steak of moose, with a bottle of old red wine to wash it down!"

"Charley, beware! Take care how you conjure up such visions in my mind. I am already nearly starving, and if you increase my appetite much more it will go hard with me if I don't dine off of you. You are young, and Bertha says you're tender——"

"Hearted, she meant. Well, so I am, if loving Bertha be any proof of it. Do you know, Dick, I have often wondered that you, who love your sister so passionately, were not jealous of her attachment to me."

"So I was, my dear fellow, at first—furiously jealous. But then I reflected that Bertha must one day or the other marry, and I must lose my sister, so I thought it better that she should marry my old college chum and early friend, Charley Costarre, than anyone else. So you see there was a little selfishness in my calculations, Charley."

"Dick, we were friends at school, and friends at college, and I thought at both those places that nothing could shorten the link that bound us together, but I was mistaken. Since my love for, and engagement to your sister, I feel as if you were fifty times the friend that you were before. Dick, we three will never part!"

"So he married the king's daughter, and they all lived together as happy as the days are long," shouted Dick with a laugh, quoting from some nursery tale.

The foregoing is a slice out of the conversation with which Dick Linton and myself endeavored to beguile the way, as we tramped through one of the forests of northern New York. Dick was an artist and I was a sportsman; so when one fine autumn day he announced his intention of going into the woods for a week to study Nature, it seemed to me an excellent opportunity to exercise my legs and my trigger finger at the same time. Dick had some backwoods friend who lived in a log hut on the shores of Eckford Lake, and there we determined to take up our quarters. Dick, who said he knew the forest thoroughly, was to be our guide, and we accordingly, with our guns on our shoulders, started on foot from Root's, a tavern known to tourists, and situated on the boundaries of Essex and Warren counties. It was a desperate walk, but as we started by daybreak and had great faith in our pedestrian qualities, we expected to reach the nearest of the Eckford lakes by nightfall. The forest through which we traveled was of the densest description. Overhead the branches of spruce and pine shut out the day, while beneath our feet lay a frightful soil, composed principally of jagged shingle, cunningly concealed by an almost impenetrable brush. As the day wore on, our hopes of reaching our destination grew fainter and fainter, and I could almost fancy, from the anxious glances that Dick cast around him, that in spite of his boasted knowledge of the woods he had lost his way. It was not, however, until night actually fell, and we were both sinking from hunger and exhaustion, that I could get him to acknowledge it.

"We're in a nice pickle, Master Dick," said I, rather crossly, for an empty stomach does much to destroy a man's natural amiability. "Confound your assurance that led you to set up as a guide. Of all men, painters are the most conceited."

"Come, Charley," answered Dick, good-humoredly,

"there's no use in growling so loudly. You'll bring the bears and panthers on us if you do. We must make the best of a bad job, and sleep in a tree."

"It's easy to talk, my good fellow. I'm not a partridge, and don't know how to roost on a bough."

"Well, you'll have to learn then, for if you sleep on the ground, the chances are ten to one but you will have the wolves nibbling at your toes before daylight."

"I'm hanged if I'll do either!" said I desperately. "I'm going to walk all night, and I'll drop before I lie down."

"Come, come, Charley, don't be a fool!"

"I was a fool only when I consented to let you assume the *rôle* of guide."

"Well, Charley, if you are determined to go on, let it be so. We'll go together. After all, it's only an adventure."

"I say, Dick, don't you see a light?"

"By Jove, so there is! Come, you see Providence intervenes between us and wolves and hunger. That must be some squatter's hut."

The light to which I had so suddenly called Dick's attention was very faint, and seemed to be about half a mile distant. It glimmered through the dark branches of the hemlock and spruce trees, and weak as the light was, I hailed it as a mariner without a compass hails the star by which he steers. We instantly set out in the direction of our beacon. In a moment it seemed as if all fatigue had vanished, and we walked as if our muscles were as tense as iron and our joints oily as a piston shaft.

We soon arrived at what in the dusk seemed to be a clearing of about five acres, but it may have been larger, for the tall forest rising up around it must have diminished its apparent size, giving it the appearance of a square pit rather than a farm. Toward one corner of the clearing we discerned the dusky outline of a log hut, through whose single end window a faint light was streaming. With a sigh of relief we hastened to the door and knocked. It was opened immediately, and a man appeared on the

threshold. We explained our condition, and were instantly invited to walk in and make ourselves at home. All our host said he could offer us was some cold Indian corn cakes and a slice of dried deer's flesh, to all of which we were heartily welcome. These viands in our starving condition were luxuries to us, and we literally reveled in anticipation of a full meal.

The hut into which we had so unceremoniously entered was of the most poverty-stricken order. It consisted of but one room, with a rude brick fireplace at one end. Some deerskins and old blankets were stretched out by way of a bed at the other extremity of the apartment, and the only seats visible were two sections of a large pine trunk that stood close to the fireplace. There was no vestige of a table, and the rest of the furniture was embodied in a long Tennessee rifle that hung close to the rough wall.

If the hut was remarkable, its proprietor was still more so. He was, I think, the most villainous-looking man I ever beheld. About six feet two inches in height, proportionately broad across the shoulders, and with a hand large enough to pick up a fifty-six-pound shot, he seemed to be a combination of extraordinary strength and agility. His head was narrow and oblong in shape. His straight Indianlike hair fell smoothly over his low forehead as if it had been plastered with soap. And his black, beadlike eyes were set obliquely, and slanted downward toward his nose, giving him a mingled expression of ferocity and cunning. As I examined his features attentively, in which I could trace almost every bad passion, I confess I experienced a certain feeling of apprehension and distrust that I could not shake off.

While he was getting us the promised food, we tried, by questioning him, to draw him into conversation. He seemed very taciturn and reserved. He said he lived entirely alone, and had cleared the spot he occupied with his own hands. He said his name was Joel, but when we hinted that he must have some other name, he pretended not to hear us, though I saw his brows knit, and his small black eyes

flash angrily. My suspicions of this man were further aroused by observing a pair of shoes lying in the corner of the hut. These shoes were at least three sizes smaller than those that our gigantic host wore, and yet he had distinctly replied that he lived entirely alone. If those shoes were not his, whose were they? The more I reflected on this circumstance the more uneasy I felt; apprehensions were still further aroused when Joel, as he called himself, took both our fowling pieces, and, in order to have them out of the way, as he said, hung them on crooks from the wall, at a height that neither Dick nor I could reach without getting on a stool. I smiled inwardly, however, as I felt the smooth barrel of my revolver that was slung in the hollow of my back by its leathern belt, and thought to myself, "If this fellow has any bad designs, the more unprotected he thinks us the more incautious he will be," so I made no effort to retain our guns. Dick also had a revolver, and was one of those men who I knew would use it well when the time came.

My suspicions of our host grew at last to such a pitch that I determined to communicate them to Dick. Nothing would be easier than for this villainous half-breed—for I felt convinced he had Indian blood in him—nothing would be easier than, with the aid of an accomplice, to cut our throats or shoot us while we were asleep, and so get our guns, watches, and whatever money we carried. Who, in those lonely woods, would hear the shot or our cries for help? What emissary of the law, however sharp, could point out our graves in those wild woods, or bring the murder home to those who committed it? Linton at first laughed, then grew serious, and gradually became a convert to my apprehensions. We hurriedly agreed that while one slept the other should watch, and so take it in turns through the night.

Joel had surrendered to us his couch of deer skin and his blankets; he himself said he could sleep quite as well on the floor near the fire. As Dick and I were both very tired, we were anxious to get our rest as soon as possible. So

after a hearty meal of deer steak and tough cakes, washed down by a good draught from our brandy flask, I, being the youngest, got the first hour's sleep, and flung myself on the couch of skins. As my eyes gradually closed, I saw a dim picture of Dick seated sternly watching by the fire, and the long shape of the half-breed stretching out like a huge shadow upon the floor.

After what I could have sworn to be only a three-minute doze, Dick woke me and informed me that my hour was out, and turning me out of my warm nest, lay down without any ceremony, and in a few seconds was heavily snoring. I rubbed my eyes, felt for my revolver, and seating myself on one of the pine stumps, commenced my watch. The half-breed appeared to be buried in a profound slumber, and in the half weird light cast by the wood embers, his enormous figure seemed almost titanic in its proportions. I confess I felt that in a struggle for life he was more than a match for Dick and myself. I then looked at the fire, and began a favorite amusement of mine—shaping forms in the embers. All sorts of figures defined themselves before me. Battles, tempests at sea, familiar faces, and above all shone, ever returning, the dear features of Bertha Linton, my affianced bride. She seemed to me to smile at me through a burning haze, and I could almost fancy I heard her say, "While you are watching in the lonely forest, I am thinking of you and praying for your safety."

A slight movement on the part of the slumbering half-breed here recalled me from those sweet dreams. He turned on his side, lifted himself slowly on his elbow, and gazed attentively at me. I did not stir. Still retaining my stooping attitude, I half closed my eyes, and remained motionless. Doubtless he thought I was asleep, for in a moment or two he rose noiselessly, and creeping with a stealthy step across the floor, passed out of the hut. I listened—oh, how eagerly! It seemed to me that, through the imperfectly joined crevices of the log walls I could plainly hear voices whispering. I would have given worlds to have

crept nearer to listen; but I was fearful of disturbing the fancied security of our host, who I now felt certain had sinister designs upon us. So I remained perfectly still. The whispering suddenly ceased. The half-breed reëntered the hut in the same stealthy way in which he had quitted it, and after giving a scrutinizing glance at me, once more stretched himself upon the floor and affected to sleep. In a few moments I pretended to awake, yawned, looked at my watch, and finding that my hour had more than expired, proceeded to wake Dick. As I turned him out of bed I whispered in his ear: "Don't take your eyes off that fellow, Dick. He has accomplices outside; be careful!" Dick gave a meaning glance, carelessly touched his revolver, as much as to say, "Here's something to interfere with his little arrangements," and took his seat on the pine stump, in such a position as to command a view of the sleeping half-breed and the doorway at the same time.

This time, though horribly tired, I could not sleep. A horrible load seemed pressing on my chest, and every five minutes I would start up to see if Dick was keeping his watch faithfully. My nerves were strung to a frightful pitch of tensity, my heart beat at every sound, and my head seemed to throb until I thought my temples would burst. The more I reflected on the conduct of the half-breed, the more assured I was that he intended murder. Full of this idea, I took my revolver from its sling and held it in my hand, ready to shoot him down at the first movement that appeared at all dangerous. A haze seemed now to pass across my eyes. Fatigued with long watching and excitement, I passed into that semiconscious state in which I seemed perfectly aware of everything that passed, although objects were dim and dull in outline, and did not appear so sharply defined as in one's waking moments. I was apparently roused from this state by a slight crackling sound. I started, and raised myself on my elbow. My heart almost ceased to beat at what I saw. The half-breed had lit some species of dried herb, which sent out a strong aromatic odor as it burned. This herb he was holding

directly under Dick's nostrils, who I now perceived, to my horror, was wrapped in a profound slumber. The smoke of this mysterious herb appeared to deprive him of all consciousness, for he rolled gently off the pine log, and lay stretched upon the floor. The half-breed now stole to the door and opened it gently. Three sinister heads peered in out of the gloom. I saw the long barrels of rifles, and the huge brawny hands that clasped them. The half-breed pointed significantly to where I lay with his long, bony finger; then, drawing a large, thirsty-looking knife from his breast, moved toward me. The time was come. My blood stopped, my heart ceased to beat. The half-breed was within a foot of my bed, the knife was raised, another instant and it would have been buried in my heart, when, with a hand as cold as ice, I lifted my revolver, took deadly aim, and fired!

A stunning report, a dull groan, a huge cloud of smoke curling around me, and I found myself standing upright, with a dark mass lying at my feet.

"Great God! what have you done, sir?" cried the half-breed, rushing toward me. "You have killed him! He was just about to wake you."

I staggered against the wall. My senses, until then immersed in sleep, suddenly recovered their activity. The frightful truth burst upon me in a flash. I had shot Dick Linton while under the influence of a nightmare! Then everything seemed to fade away, and I remember no more.

There was a trial, I believe. The lawyers were learned, and proved by physicians that it was a case of what is called *somnolentia*, or sleep drunkenness; but of the proceedings I took no heed. One form haunted me, lying black and heavy on the hut floor; and one pale face was ever present—a face I saw once after the terrible catastrophe, and never saw again—the wild, despairing face of Bertha Linton, my promised bride!

My Wife's Tempter

I

A PREDESTINED MARRIAGE

Elsie and I were to be married in less than a week. It was rather a strange match, and I knew that some of our neighbors shook their heads over it and said that no good would come. The way it came to pass was thus.

I loved Elsie Burns for two years, during which time she refused me three times. I could no more help asking her to have me, when the chance offered, than I could help breathing or living. To love her seemed natural to me as existence. I felt no shame, only sorrow, when she rejected me; I felt no shame either when I renewed my suit. The neighbors called me mean-spirited to take up with any girl that had refused me as often as Elsie Burns had done; but what cared I about the neighbors? If it is black weather, and the sun is under a cloud every day for a month, is that any reason why the poor farmer should not hope for the blue sky and the plentiful burst of warm light when the dark month is over? I never entirely lost heart. Do not, however, mistake me. I did not mope, and moan, and grow pale, after the manner of poetical lovers. No such thing. I went bravely about my business, ate and drank as usual, laughed when the laugh went round, and slept soundly, and woke refreshed. Yet all this time I loved—desperately loved—Elsie Burns. I went wherever I hoped to meet her, but did not haunt her with my attentions. I behaved to her as any friendly young man would have behaved: I met her and parted from her cheerfully. She was a good girl, too, and behaved well. She had me in her power—how a woman in Elsie's situation could have mortified a man in mine!—but she never took the slightest advantage of it. She danced with me when I asked her, and had no foolish fears of allowing me to see her home of nights, after a ball

was over, or of wandering with me through the pleasant New England fields when the wild flowers made the paths like roads in fairyland.

On the several disastrous occasions when I presented my suit I did it simply and manfully, telling her that I loved her very much, and would do everything to make her happy if she would be my wife. I made no fulsome protestations, and did not once allude to suicide. She, on the other hand, calmly and gravely thanked me for my good opinion, but with the same calm gravity rejected me. I used to tell her that I was grieved; that I would not press her; that I would wait and hope for some change in her feelings. She had an esteem for me, she would say, but could not marry me. I never asked her for any reasons. I hold it to be an insult to a woman of sense to demand her reasons on such an occasion. Enough for me that she did not then wish to be my wife; so that the old intercourse went on—she cordial and polite as ever, I never for one moment doubting that the day would come when my roof tree would shelter her, and we should smile together over our fireside at my long and indefatigable wooing.

I will confess that at times I felt a little jealous—jealous of a man named Hammond Brake, who lived in our village. He was a weird, saturnine fellow, who made no friends among the young men of the neighborhood, but who loved to go alone, with his books and his own thoughts for company. He was a studious and, I believe, a learned young man, and there was no avoiding the fact that he possessed considerable influence over Elsie. She liked to talk with him in corners, or in secluded nooks of the forest, when we all went out blackberry gathering or picnicking. She read books that he gave her, and whenever a discussion arose relative to any topic higher than those ordinary ones we usually canvassed, Elsie appealed to Brake for his opinion, as a disciple consulting a beloved master. I confess that for a time I feared this man as a rival. A little closer observation, however, convinced me that my suspicions were unfounded. The relation between Elsie and Ham-

mond Brake were purely intellectual. She reverenced his talents and acquirements, but she did not love him. His influence over her, nevertheless, was none the less decided.

In time—as I thought all along—Elsie yielded. I was what was considered a most eligible match, being tolerably rich, and Elsie's parents were most anxious to have me for a son-in-law. I was good-looking and well educated enough, and the old people, I believe, pertinaciously dinned all my advantages into my little girl's ears. She battled against the marriage for a long time with a strange persistence—all the more strange because she never alleged the slightest personal dislike to me; but after a vigorous cannonading from her own garrison (in which, I am proud to say, I did not in any way join), she hoisted the white flag and surrendered.

I was very happy. I had no fear about being able to gain Elsie's heart. I think—indeed I know—that she had liked me all along, and that her refusals were dictated by other feelings than those of a personal nature. I only guessed as much then. It was some time before I knew all.

As the day approached for our wedding Elsie did not appear at all stricken with woe. The village gossips had not the smallest opportunity for establishing a romance, with a compulsory bride for the heroine. Yet to me it seemed as if there was something strange about her. A vague terror appeared to beset her. Even in her most loving moments, when resting in my arms, she would shrink away from me, and shudder as if some cold wind had suddenly struck upon her. That it was caused by no aversion to me was evident, for she would the moment after, as if to make amends, give me one of those voluntary kisses that are sweeter than all others.

I reflected over this gravely, as was my custom, but could come to no conclusion. I dismissed it as one of those mysteries of maidenhood which it is not given to man to fathom.

The day came at length on which we were to be married—a glorious autumnal day, on which the sweet season of fruits and flowers seemed to have copied the kings of

old, and robed itself in its brightest purple and gold, in order to die with becoming splendor. The little village church was nearly filled with the bridal party and the curious crowd who came to see the persevering lover win his bride. Elsie was calm, and grave, and beautiful. The sober beauty of the autumn itself seemed to tinge her face.

Once only did she show any emotion. When the solemn question was put to her, the answer to which was to decide her destiny, I felt her hand—which was in mine—tremble. As she gasped out a convulsive "Yes," she gave one brief, imploring glance at the gallery on the right. I placed the ring upon her finger, and looked in the direction in which she gazed. Hammond Brake's dark countenance was visible looking over the railings, and his eyes were bent sternly on Elsie. I turned quickly round to my bride, but her brief emotion, of whatever nature, had vanished. She was looking at me anxiously, and smiling—somewhat sadly—through her maiden's tears.

I kissed her, and whispered a loving word or two in her ear, at which she brightened; and her grave, decorous old father, and quaint, tender-hearted mother, kissed her, and we rode all alone through glories of the autumn woods to our home.

II

THE STRANGE BOOK

The months went by quickly, and we were very happy. I learned that Elsie really loved me, and of my love for her she had proof long ago. I will not say that there was no cloud upon our little horizon. There was one, but it was so small, and appeared so seldom, that I scarcely feared it. The old vague terror seemed still to attack my wife. If I did not know her to be pure as heaven's snow, I would have said it was *a remorse*. At times she scarcely appeared to hear what I said, so deep would be her reverie. Nor did those moods seem pleasant ones. When rapt in such, her

sweet features would contract, as if in a hopeless effort to solve some mysterious problem. A sad pain, as it were, quivered in her white, drooped eyelids. One thing I particularly remarked: *she spent hours at a time gazing at the west.* There was a small room in our house whose windows, every evening, flamed with the red light of the setting sun. Here Elsie would sit and gaze westward, so motionless and entranced that it seemed as if her soul was going down with the day. Her conduct to me was curiously varied. She apparently loved me very much, yet there were times when she absolutely avoided me. I have seen her strolling through the fields, and left the house with the intention of joining her, but the moment she caught sight of me approaching she has fled into the neighboring copse, with so evident a wish to avoid me that it would have been absolutely cruel to follow.

Once or twice the old jealousy of Hammond Brake crossed my mind, but I was obliged to dismiss it as a frivolous suspicion. Nothing in my wife's conduct justified any such theory. Brake visited us once or twice a week—in fact, when I returned from my business in the village, I used to find him seated in the parlor with Elsie, reading some favorite author, or conversing on some novel literary topic; but there was no disposition to avoid my scrutiny. Brake seemed to come as a matter of right; and the perfect unconsciousness of furnishing any grounds for suspicion with which he acted was a sufficient answer to my mind for any wild doubts that my heart may have suggested.

Still I could not but remark that Brake's visits were in some manner connected with Elsie's melancholy. On the days when he had appeared and departed, the gloom seemed to hang more thickly than ever over her head. She sat, on such occasions, all the evening at the western window, silently gazing at the cleft in the hills through which the sun passed to his repose.

At last I made up my mind to speak to her. It seemed to me to be my duty, if she had a sorrow, to partake of it. I approached her on the matter with the most perfect con-

fidence that I had nothing to learn beyond the existence of some girlish grief, which a confession and a few loving kisses would exorcise forever.

"Elsie," I said to her one night, as she sat, according to her custom, gazing westward, like those maidens of the old ballads of chivalry watching for the knights that never came—"Elsie, what is the matter with you, darling? I have noticed a strange melancholy in you for some time past. Tell me all about it."

She turned quickly round and gazed at me with eyes wide open and face filled with a sudden fear. "Why do you ask me that, Mark?" she answered. "I have nothing to tell."

From the strange, startled manner in which this reply was given, I felt convinced that she had something to tell, and instantly formed a determination to discover what it was. A pang shot through my heart as I thought that the woman whom I held dearer than anything on earth hesitated to trust me with a petty secret.

"Elsie," I said, "don't treat me as if I were a grand inquisitor, with racks and thumbscrews in readiness for you if you prove contumacious. You need not look at me in that frightened way. I'm not an ogre, child. I don't breakfast on nice, cozy little women five months married. Supposing you do owe a bill to the milliner in Boston—what does it matter? I'm tolerably rich. How much is it?"

I knew perfectly well that she did not owe any such bill, but it was a mode of testing her. A look of relief passed over her features as I spoke.

"Mark," she said, stroking my hair with her little hand and smiling faintly, "you're a goose. I don't owe any bill to the milliner in Boston, and I have no secret worth knowing. I know I'm a little melancholy at times—I feel weary; but that is not unnatural, you know, just now, Mark dear"—kissing me on the lips—"you must bear with my moods for a little while, until there are *three* of us, and then I'll be better company."

I knew what she alluded to, but, God help me! I felt

sad enough at the moment, though I kissed her back and ceased to question her. I felt sad, because my instinct told me that she deceived me; and it is very hard to be deceived, even in trifles, by those we love. I left her sitting at her favorite window, and walked out into the fields. I wanted to think.

I remained out until I saw lights in the parlor shining through the dusky evening; then I returned slowly. As I passed the windows — which were near the ground, our house being cottage-built—I looked in. Hammond Brake was sitting with my wife. She was sitting in a rocking chair opposite to him, holding a small volume open on her lap. Brake was talking to her very earnestly, and she was listening to him with an expression I had never before seen on her countenance. Awe, fear, and admiration were all blent together in those dilating eyes. She seemed absorbed, body and soul, in what this man said. I shuddered at the sight. A vague terror seized upon me; I hastened into the house. As I entered the room rather suddenly, my wife started and hastily concealed the little volume that lay on her lap in one of her wide pockets. As she did so, a loose leaf escaped from the volume and slowly fluttered to the floor unobserved by either her or her companion. But I had my eye upon it. I felt that it was a clew.

"What new novel or philosophical wonder have you both been poring over?" I asked quite gayly, stealthily watching at the same time the telltale embarrassment under which Elsie was laboring.

Brake, who was not in the least discomposed, replied. "That," said he, "is a secret which must be kept from you. It is an advance copy, and is not to be shown to anyone except your wife."

"Ha!" cried I, "I know what it is. It is your volume of poems that Ticknor is publishing. Well, I can wait until it is regularly for sale."

I knew that Brake had a volume in the hands of the publishing house I mentioned, with a vague promise of publication some time in the present century. Hammond smiled

significantly, but did not reply. He evidently wished to cultivate this supposed impression of mine. Elsie looked relieved, and heaved a deep sigh. I felt more than ever convinced that a secret was beneath all this. So I drew my chair over the fallen leaf that lay unnoticed on the carpet, and talked and laughed with Hammond Brake gayly, as if nothing was on my mind, while all the time a great load of suspicion lay heavily at my heart.

At length Hammond Brake rose to go. I wished him good night, but did not offer to accompany him to the door. My wife supplied this omitted courtesy, as I had expected. The moment I was alone I picked up the book leaf from the floor. It was *not* the leaf of a volume of poems. Beyond that, however, I learned nothing. It contained a string of paragraphs printed in the biblical fashion, and the language was biblical in style. It seemed to be a portion of some religious book. Was it possible that my wife was being converted to the Romish faith? Yes, that was it. Brake was a Jesuit in disguise—I had heard of such things—and had stolen into the bosom of my family to plant there his destructive errors. There could be no longer any doubt of it. This was some portion of a Romish book—some infamous Popish publication. Fool that I was not to see it all before! But there was yet time. I would forbid him the house.

I had just formed this resolution when my wife entered. I put the strange leaf in my pocket and took my hat.

"Why, you are not going out, surely?" cried Elsie, surprised.

"I have a headache," I answered. "I will take a short walk."

Elsie looked at me with a peculiar air of distrust. Her woman's instinct told her that there was something wrong. Before she could question me, however, I had left the room and was walking rapidly on Hammond Brake's track.

He heard the footsteps, and I saw his figure, black against the sky, stop and peer back through the dusk to see who was following him.

"It is I, Brake," I called out. "Stop; I wish to speak with you."

He stopped, and in a minute or so we were walking side by side along the road. My fingers itched at that moment to be on his throat. I commenced the conversation.

"Brake," I said, "I'm a very plain sort of man, and I never say anything without good reason. What I came after you to tell you is, that I don't wish you to come to my house any more, or to speak with Elsie any farther than the ordinary salutations go. It's no joke. I'm quite in earnest."

Brake started, and, stopping short, faced me suddenly in the road. "What have I done?" he asked. "You surely are too sensible a man to be jealous, Dayton."

"Oh," I answered scornfully, "not jealous in the ordinary sense of the word, a bit. But I don't think your company good company for my wife, Brake. If you *will* have it out of me, I suspect you of being a Roman Catholic, and of trying to convert my wife."

A smile shot across his face, and I saw his sharp white teeth gleam for an instant in the dusk.

"Well, what if I am a Papist?" he said, with a strange tone of triumph in his voice. "The faith is not criminal. Besides, what proof have you that I was attempting to proselyte your wife?"

"This," said I, pulling the leaf from my pocket—"this leaf from one of those devilish Papist books you and she were reading this evening. I picked it up from the floor. Proof enough, I think!"

In an instant Brake had snatched the leaf from my hand and torn it into atoms.

"You shall be obeyed," he said. "I will not speak with Elsie as long as she is your wife. Good night. You think I'm a Papist, then, Dayton? You're a clever fellow!" And with rather a sneering chuckle he marched on along the road and vanished into the darkness.

III

THE SECRET DISCOVERED

BRAKE came no more. I said nothing to Elsie about his prohibition, and his name was never mentioned. It seemed strange to me that she should not speak of his absence, and I was very much puzzled by her silence. Her moodiness seemed to have increased, and, what was most remarkable, in proportion as she grew more and more reserved, the intenser were the bursts of affection which she exhibited for me. She would strain me to her bosom and kiss me, as if she and I were about to be parted forever. Then for hours she would remain sitting at her window, silently gazing, with that terrible, wistful gaze of hers, at the west.

I will confess to having watched my wife at this time. I could not help it. That some mystery hung about her I felt convinced. I must fathom it or die. Her honor I never for a moment doubted; yet there seemed to weigh continually upon me the prophecy of some awful domestic calamity. This time the prophecy was not in vain.

About three weeks after I had forbidden Brake my house, I was strolling over my farm in the evening apparently inspecting my agriculture, but in reality speculating on that topic which latterly was ever present to me.

There was a little knoll covered with evergreen oaks at the end of the lawn. It was a picturesque spot, for on one side the bank went off into a sheer precipice of about eighty feet in depth, at the bottom of which a pretty pool lay, that in the summer time was fringed with white water-lilies. I had thought of building a summer-house in this spot, and now my steps mechanically directed themselves toward the place. As I approached I heard voices. I stopped and listened eagerly. A few seconds enabled me to ascertain that Hammond Brake and my wife were in the copse talking together. She still followed him, then;

and he, scoundrel that he was, had broken his promise. A fury seemed to fill my veins as I made this discovery. I felt the impulse strong upon me to rush into the grove, and then and there strangle the villain who was poisoning my peace. But with a powerful effort I restrained myself. It was necessary that I should overhear what was said. I threw myself flat on the grass, and so glided silently into the copse until I was completely within earshot. This was what I heard.

My wife was sobbing. "So soon—so soon? I—Hammond, give me a little time!"

"I cannot, Elsie. My chief orders me to join him. You must prepare to accompany me."

"No, no!" murmured Elsie. "He loves me so! And I love him. Our child, too—how can I rob him of our unborn babe?"

"Another sheep for our flock," answered Brake solemnly. "Elsie, do you forget your oath? Are you one of us, or are you a common hypocrite, who will be of us until the hour of self-sacrifice, and then fly like a coward? Elsie, you must leave to-night."

"Ah! my husband, my husband!" sobbed the unhappy woman.

"You have no husband, woman," cried Brake harshly. "I promised Dayton not to speak to you as long as you were his wife, but the vow was annulled before it was made. Your husband in God yet awaits you. You will yet be blessed with the true spouse."

"I feel as if I were going to die," cried Elsie. "How can I ever forsake him—he who was so good to me?"

"Nonsense! no weakness. He is not worthy of you. Go home and prepare for your journey. You know where to meet me. I will have everything ready, and by daybreak there shall be no trace of us left. Beware of permitting your husband to suspect anything. He is not very shrewd at such things—he thought I was a Jesuit in disguise—but we had better be careful. Now go. You have been too long here already. Bless you, sister."

A few faint sobs, a rustling of leaves, and I knew that Brake was alone. I rose, and stepped silently into the open space in which he stood. His back was toward me. His arms were lifted high over his head with an exultant gesture, and I could see his profile, as it slightly turned toward me, illuminated with a smile of scornful triumph. I put my hand suddenly on his throat from behind, and flung him on the ground before he could utter a cry.

"Not a word," I said, unclasping a short-bladed knife which I carried; "answer my questions, or, by heaven, I will cut your throat from ear to ear!"

He looked up into my face with an unflinching eye, and set his lips as if resolved to suffer all.

"What are you? Who are you? What object have you in the seduction of my wife?"

He smiled, but was silent.

"Ah! you won't answer. We'll see."

I pressed the knife slowly against his throat. His face contracted spasmodically, but although a thin red thread of blood sprang out along the edge of the blade, Brake remained mute. An idea suddenly seized me. This sort of death had no terrors for him. I would try another. There was the precipice. I was twice as powerful as he was, so I seized him in my arms, and in a moment transported him to the margin of the steep, smooth cliff, the edge of which was garnished with the tough stems of the wild vine. He seemed to feel it was useless to struggle with me, so allowed me passively to roll him over the edge. When he was suspended in the air, I gave him a vine stem to cling to and let him go. He swung at a height of eighty feet, with face upturned and pale. He dared not look down. I seated myself on the edge of the cliff, and with my knife began to cut into the thick vine a foot or two above the place of his grasp. I was correct in my calculation. This terror was too much for him. As he saw the notch in the vine getting deeper and deeper, his determination gave way.

"I'll answer you," he gasped out, gazing at me with starting eyeballs; "what do you ask?"

"What are you?" was my question, as I ceased cutting at the stem.

"A Mormon," was the answer, uttered with a groan. "Take me up. My hands are slipping. Quick!"

"And you wanted my wife to follow you to that infernal Salt Lake City, I suppose?"

"For God's sake, release me! I'll quit the place, never to come back. Do help me up, Dayton—I'm falling!"

I felt mightily inclined to let the villain drop; but it did not suit my purpose to be hung for murder, so I swung him back again on the sward, where he fell panting and exhausted.

"Will you quit the place to-night?" I said. "You'd better. By heaven, if you don't, I'll tell all the men in the village, and we'll lynch you, as sure as your name is Brake."

"I'll go—I'll go," he groaned. "I swear never to trouble you again."

"You ought to be hanged, you villain. Be off!"

He slunk away through the trees like a beaten dog; and I went home in a state bordering on despair. I found Elsie crying. She was sitting by the window as of old. I knew now why she gazed so constantly at the west. It was her Mecca. Something in my face, I suppose, told her that I was laboring under great excitement. She rose startled as soon as I entered the room.

"Elsie," said I, "I am come to take you home."

"Home? Why, I *am* at home, am I not? What do you mean?"

"No. This is no longer your home. You have deceived me. You are a Mormon. I know all. You have become a convert to that apostle of hell, Brigham Young, and you cannot live with me. I love you still, Elsie, dearly; but—you must go and live with your father."

She saw there was no appeal from my word, and with a face hopeless with despair she arranged her dress and passively went with me.

I live in the same village with my wife, and yet am a widower. She is very penitent, they say; yet I cannot bring myself to believe that one who has allowed the Mormon poison to enter her veins can ever be cured. People say that we shall come together again, but I know better. Mine is not the first hearth that Mormonism has rendered desolate.

Bulwer-Lytton

The Incantation

I

A drowning man clutching at a straw—such is Dr. Fenwick, hero of Bulwer-Lytton's "Strange Story" when he determines to lend himself to alleged "magic" in the hope of saving his suffering wife from the physical dangers which have succeeded her mental disease. The proposition has been made to him by Margrave, a wanderer in many countries, who has followed the Fenwicks from England to Australia. Margrave declares that he needs an accomplice to secure an "elixir of life" which his own failing strength demands. His mysterious mesmeric or hypnotic influence over Mrs. Fenwick had in former days been marked; and on the basis of this undeniable fact, he has endeavored to show that his own welfare and Mrs. Fenwick's are, in some occult fashion, knit together, and that only by aiding him in some extraordinary experiment can the physician snatch his beloved Lilian from her impending doom.

As the first chapter opens, Fenwick is learning his wife's condition from his friend, Dr. Faber.

"I BELIEVE that for at least twelve hours there will be no change in her state. I believe also that if she recover from it, calm and refreshed, as from a sleep, the danger of death will have passed away."

"And for twelve hours my presence would be hurtful?"

"Rather say fatal, if my diagnosis be right."

I wrung my friend's hand, and we parted.

Oh, to lose her now; now that her love and her reason had both returned, each more vivid than before! Futile, indeed, might be Margrave's boasted secret; but at least in that secret was hope. In recognized science I saw only despair.

And at that thought all dread of this mysterious visitor

vanished—all anxiety to question more of his attributes or his history. His life itself became to me dear and precious. What if it should fail me in the steps of the process, whatever that was, by which the life of my Lilian might be saved!

The shades of evening were now closing in. I remembered that I had left Margrave without even food for many hours. I stole round to the back of the house, filled a basket with elements more generous than those of the former day; extracted fresh drugs from my stores, and, thus laden, hurried back to the hut. I found Margrave in the room below, seated on his mysterious coffer, leaning his face on his hand. When I entered, he looked up, and said:

"You have neglected me. My strength is waning. Give me more of the cordial, for we have work before us to-night, and I need support."

He took for granted my assent to his wild experiment; and he was right.

I administered the cordial. I placed food before him, and this time he did not eat with repugnance. I poured out wine, and he drank it sparingly, but with ready compliance, saying, "In perfect health, I looked upon wine as poison; now it is like a foretaste of the glorious elixir."

After he had thus recruited himself, he seemed to acquire an energy that startlingly contrasted with his languor the day before; the effort of breathing was scarcely perceptible; the color came back to his cheeks; his bended frame rose elastic and erect.

"If I understood you rightly," said I, "the experiment you ask me to aid can be accomplished in a single night?"

"In a single night—this night."

"Command me. Why not begin at once? What apparatus or chemical agencies do you need?"

"Ah!" said Margrave. "Formerly, how I was misled! Formerly, how my conjectures blundered! I thought, when I asked you to give a month to the experiment I wish to make, that I should need the subtlest skill of the chemist. I then believed, with Van Helmont, that the principle of

life is a gas, and that the secret was but in the mode by which the gas might be rightly administered. But now, all that I need is contained in this coffer, save one very simple material—fuel sufficient for a steady fire for six hours. I see even that is at hand, piled up in your outhouse. And now for the substance itself—to that you must guide me."

"Explain."

"Near this very spot is there not gold—in mines yet undiscovered—and gold of the purest metal?"

"There is. What then? Do you, with the alchemists, blend in one discovery, gold and life?"

"No. But it is only where the chemistry of earth or of man produces gold, that the substance from which the great pabulum of life is extracted by ferment can be found. Possibly, in the attempts at that transmutation of metals, which I think your own great chemist, Sir Humphry Davy, allowed might be possible, but held not to be worth the cost of the process—possibly, in those attempts, some scanty grains of this substance were found by the alchemists, in the crucible, with grains of the metal as niggardly yielded by pitiful mimicry of Nature's stupendous laboratory; and from such grains enough of the essence might, perhaps, have been drawn forth, to add a few years of existence to some feeble graybeard—granting, what rests on no proofs, that some of the alchemists reached an age rarely given to man. But it is not in the miserly crucible, it is in the matrix of Nature herself, that we must seek in prolific abundance Nature's grand principle—life. As the loadstone is rife with the magnetic virtue, as amber contains the electric, so in this substance, to which we yet want a name, is found the bright life-giving fluid. In the old gold mines of Asia and Europe the substance exists, but can rarely be met with. The soil for its nutriment may there be well nigh exhausted. It is here, where Nature herself is all vital with youth, that the nutriment of youth must be sought. Near this spot is gold; guide me to it."

"You cannot come with me. The place which I know

as auriferous is some miles distant, the way rugged. You cannot walk to it. It is true I have horses, but——"

"Do you think I have come this distance and not foreseen and forestalled all that I want for my object? Trouble yourself not with conjectures how I can arrive at the place. I have provided the means to arrive at and leave it. My litter and its bearers are in reach of my call. Give me your arm to the rising ground, fifty yards from your door."

I obeyed mechanically, stifling all surprise. I had made my resolve, and admitted no thought that could shake it.

When we reached the summit of the grassy hillock, which sloped from the road that led to the seaport, Margrave, after pausing to recover breath, lifted up his voice, in a key, not loud, but shrill and slow and prolonged, half cry and half chant, like the nighthawk's. Through the air—so limpid and still, bringing near far objects, far sounds—the voice pierced its way, artfully pausing, till wave after wave of the atmosphere bore and transmitted it on.

In a few minutes the call seemed reëchoed, so exactly, so cheerily, that for the moment I thought that the note was the mimicry of the shy mocking lyre bird, which mimics so merrily all that it hears in its coverts, from the whir of the locust to the howl of the wild dog.

"What king," said the mystical charmer, and as he spoke he carelessly rested his hand on my shoulder, so that I trembled to feel that this dread son of Nature, Godless and soulless, who had been—and, my heart whispered, who still could be—my bane and mind darkener, leaned upon me for support, as the spoiled younger-born on his brother—"what king," said this cynical mocker, with his beautiful boyish face—"what king in your civilized Europe has the sway of a chief of the East? What link is so strong between mortal and mortal as that between lord and slave? I transport yon poor fools from the land of their birth; they preserve here their old habits—obedience and awe. They would wait till they starved in the solitude—wait to hearken and answer my call. And I, who thus rule them, or charm them—I use and despise them. They know that, and yet

serve me! Between you and me, my philosopher, there is but one thing worth living for—life for oneself."

Is it age, is it youth, that thus shocks all my sense, in my solemn completeness of man? Perhaps, in great capitals, young men of pleasure will answer, "It is youth; and we think what he says!" Young friends, I do not believe you.

II

Along the grass track I saw now, under the moon, just risen, a strange procession—never seen before in Australian pastures. It moved on, noiselessly but quickly. We descended the hillock, and met it on the way; a sable litter, borne by four men, in unfamiliar Eastern garments; two other servitors, more bravely dressed, with yataghans and silver-hilted pistols in their belts, preceded this somber equipage. Perhaps Margrave divined the disdainful thought that passed through my mind, vaguely and half-unconsciously; for he said with a hollow, bitter laugh that had replaced the lively peal of his once melodious mirth:

"A little leisure and a little gold, and your raw colonist, too, will have the tastes of a pasha."

I made no answer. I had ceased to care who and what was my tempter. To me his whole being was resolved into one problem: had he a secret by which death could be turned from Lilian?

But now, as the litter halted, from the long, dark shadow which it cast upon the turf, the figure of a woman emerged and stood before us. The outlines of her shape were lost in the loose folds of a black mantle, and the features of her face were hidden by a black veil, except only the dark-bright, solemn eyes. Her stature was lofty, her bearing majestic, whether in movement or repose.

Margrave accosted her in some language unknown to me. She replied in what seemed to me the same tongue. The tones of her voice were sweet, but inexpressibly mournful. The words that they uttered appeared intended to

warn, or deprecate, or dissuade; but they called to Margrave's brow a lowering frown, and drew from his lips a burst of unmistakable anger. The woman rejoined, in the same melancholy music of voice. And Margrave then, leaning his arm upon her shoulder, as he had leaned it on mine, drew her away from the group into a neighboring copse of the flowering eucalypti—mystic trees, never changing the hues of their pale-green leaves, ever shifting the tints of their ash-gray, shedding bark. For some moments I gazed on the two human forms, dimly seen by the glinting moonlight through the gaps in the foliage. Then turning away my eyes, I saw, standing close at my side, a man whom I had not noticed before. His footstep, as it stole to me, had fallen on the sward without sound. His dress, though Oriental, differed from that of his companions, both in shape and color—fitting close to the breast, leaving the arms bare to the elbow, and of a uniform ghastly white, as are the cerements of the grave. His visage was even darker than those of the Syrians or Arabs behind him, and his features were those of a bird of prey: the beak of the eagle, but the eye of the vulture. His cheeks were hollow; the arms, crossed on his breast, were long and fleshless. Yet in that skeleton form there was a something which conveyed the idea of a serpent's suppleness and strength; and as the hungry, watchful eyes met my own startled gaze, I recoiled impulsively with that inward warning of danger which is conveyed to man, as to inferior animals, in the very aspect of the creatures that sting or devour. At my movement the man inclined his head in the submissive Eastern salutation, and spoke in his foreign tongue, softly, humbly, fawningly, to judge by his tone and his gesture.

I moved yet farther away from him with loathing, and now the human thought flashed upon me: was I, in truth, exposed to no danger in trusting myself to the mercy of the weird and remorseless master of those hirelings from the East—seven men in number, two at least of them formidably armed, and docile as bloodhounds to the hunter,

who has only to show them their prey? But fear of man like myself is not my weakness; where fear found its way to my heart, it was through the doubts or the fancies in which man like myself disappeared in the attributes, dark and unknown, which we give to a fiend or a specter. And, perhaps, if I could have paused to analyze my own sensations, the very presence of this escort—creatures of flesh and blood—lessened the dread of my incomprehensible tempter. Rather, a hundred times, front and defy those seven Eastern slaves—I, haughty son of the Anglo-Saxon who conquers all races because he fears no odds—than have seen again on the walls of my threshold the luminous, bodiless shadow! Besides: Lilian—Lilian! for one chance of saving her life, however wild and chimerical that chance might be, I would have shrunk not a foot from the march of an army.

Thus reassured and thus resolved, I advanced, with a smile of disdain, to meet Margrave and his veiled companion, as they now came from the moonlit copse.

"Well," I said to him, with an irony that unconsciously mimicked his own, "have you taken advice with your nurse? I assume that the dark form by your side is that of Ayesha!"[1]

The woman looked at me from her sable veil, with her steadfast, solemn eyes, and said, in English, though with a foreign accent: "The nurse born in Asia is but wise through her love; the pale son of Europe is wise through his art. The nurse says, 'Forbear!' Do you say, 'Adventure'?"

"Peace!" exclaimed Margrave, stamping his foot on the ground. "I take no counsel from either; it is for me to resolve, for you to obey, and for him to aid. Night is come, and we waste it; move on."

The woman made no reply, nor did I. He took my arm and walked back to the hut. The barbaric escort followed. When we reached the door of the building, Margrave said a few words to the woman and to the litter bearers. They

[1] Margrave's former nurse and attendant.

entered the hut with us. Margrave pointed out to the woman his coffer, to the men the fuel stowed in the outhouse. Both were borne away and placed within the litter. Meanwhile I took from the table, on which it was carelessly thrown, the light hatchet that I habitually carried with me in my rambles.

"Do you think that you need that idle weapon?" said Margrave. "Do you fear the good faith of my swarthy attendants?"

"Nay, take the hatchet yourself; its use is to sever the gold from the quartz in which we may find it imbedded, or to clear, as this shovel, which will also be needed, from the slight soil above it, the ore that the mine in the mountain flings forth, as the sea casts its waifs on the sands."

"Give me your hand, fellow laborer!" said Margrave, joyfully. "Ah, there is no faltering terror in this pulse! I was not mistaken in the man. What rests, but the place and the hour?—I shall live, I shall live!"

III

Margrave now entered the litter, and the Veiled Woman drew the black curtains round him. I walked on, as the guide, some yards in advance. The air was still, heavy, and parched with the breath of the Australasian sirocco.

We passed through the meadow lands, studded with slumbering flocks; we followed the branch of the creek, which was linked to its source in the mountains by many a trickling waterfall; we threaded the gloom of stunted, misshapen trees, gnarled with the stringy bark which makes one of the signs of the strata that nourish gold; and at length the moon, now in all her pomp of light, mid-heaven among her subject stars, gleamed through the fissures of the cave, on whose floor lay the relics of antediluvian races, and rested in one flood of silvery splendor upon the hollows of the extinct volcano, with tufts of dank herbage, and wide spaces of paler sward, covering the gold below—gold, the

dumb symbol of organized Matter's great mystery, storing in itself, according as Mind, the informer of Matter, can distinguish its uses, evil and good, bane and blessing.

Hitherto the Veiled Woman had remained in the rear, with the white-robed, skeletonlike image that had crept to my side unawares with its noiseless step. Thus, in each winding turn of the difficult path at which the convoy following behind me came into sight, I had seen, first, the two gayly dressed, armed men, next the black, bierlike litter, and last the Black-veiled Woman and the White-robed Skeleton.

But now, as I halted on the tableland, backed by the mountain and fronting the valley, the woman left her companion, passed by the litter and the armed men, and paused by my side, at the mouth of the moonlit cavern.

There for a moment she stood, silent, the procession below mounting upward laboriously and slow; then she turned to me, and her veil was withdrawn.

The face on which I gazed was wondrously beautiful, and severely awful. There was neither youth nor age, but beauty, mature and majestic as that of a marble Demeter.

"Do you believe in that which you seek?" she asked in her foreign, melodious, melancholy accents.

"I have no belief," was my answer. "True science has none. True science questions all things, takes nothing upon credit. It knows but three states of the mind—denial, conviction, and that vast interval between the two which is not belief but suspense of judgment."

The woman let fall her veil, moved from me, and seated herself on a crag above that cleft between mountain and creek, to which, when I had first discovered the gold that the land nourished, the rain from the clouds had given the rushing life of the cataract; but which now, in the drought and the hush of the skies, was but a dead pile of stones.

The litter now ascended the height: its bearers halted; a lean hand tore the curtains aside, and Margrave descended leaning, this time, not on the Black-veiled Woman, but on the White-robed Skeleton.

There, as he stood, the moon shone full on his wasted form; on his face, resolute, cheerful, and proud, despite its hollowed outlines and sicklied hues. He raised his head, spoke in the language unknown to me, and the armed men and the litter bearers grouped round him, bending low, their eyes fixed on the ground. The Veiled Woman rose slowly and came to his side, motioning away, with a mute sign, the ghastly form on which he leaned, and passing round him silently, instead, her own sustaining arm. Margrave spoke again a few sentences, of which I could not even guess the meaning. When he had concluded, the armed men and the litter bearers came nearer to his feet, knelt down, and kissed his hand. They then rose, and took from the bierlike vehicle the coffer and the fuel. This done, they lifted again the litter, and again, preceded by the armed men, the procession descended down the sloping hillside, down into the valley below.

Margrave now whispered, for some moments, into the ear of the hideous creature who had made way for the Veiled Woman. The grim skeleton bowed his head submissively, and strode noiselessly away through the long grasses —the slender stems, trampled under his stealthy feet, relifting themselves as after a passing wind. And thus he, too, sank out of sight down into the valley below. On the tableland of the hill remained only we three—Margrave, myself, and the Veiled Woman.

She had reseated herself apart, on the gray crag above the dried torrent. He stood at the entrance of the cavern, round the sides of which clustered parasital plants, with flowers of all colors, some among them opening their petals and exhaling their fragrance only in the hours of night; so that, as his form filled up the jaws of the dull arch, obscuring the moonbeam that strove to pierce the shadows that slept within, it stood now—wan and blighted—as I had seen it first, radiant and joyous, literally "framed in blooms."

IV

"So," said Margrave, turning to me, "under the soil that spreads around us lies the gold which to you and to me is at this moment of no value, except as a guide to its twin-born—the regenerator of life!"

"You have not yet described to me the nature of the substance which we are to explore, nor the process by which the virtues you impute to it are to be extracted."

"Let us first find the gold, and instead of describing the life-amber, so let me call it, I will point it out to your own eyes. As to the process, your share in it is so simple that you will ask me why I seek aid from a chemist. The life-amber, when found, has but to be subjected to heat and fermentation for six hours; it will be placed in a small caldron which that coffer contains, over the fire which that fuel will feed. To give effect to the process, certain alkalies and other ingredients are required; but these are prepared, and mine is the task to commingle them. From your science as chemist I need and ask naught. In you I have sought only the aid of a man."

"If that be so, why, indeed, seek me at all? Why not confide in those swarthy attendants, who doubtless are slaves to your orders?"

"Confide in slaves, when the first task enjoined to them would be to discover, and refrain from purloining gold! Seven such unscrupulous knaves, or even one such, and I, thus defenseless and feeble! Such is not the work that wise masters confide to fierce slaves. But that is the least of the reasons which exclude them from my choice, and fix my choice of assistant on you. Do you forget what I told you of the danger which the Dervish declared no bribe I could offer could tempt him a second time to brave?"

"I remember now; those words had passed away from my mind."

"And because they had passed away from your mind, I chose you for my comrade. I need a man by whom danger is scorned."

"But in the process of which you tell me I see no possible danger unless the ingredients you mix in your caldron have poisonous fumes."

"It is not that. The ingredients I use are not poisons."

"What other danger, except you dread your own Eastern slaves? But, if so, why lead them to these solitudes; and, if so, why not bid me be armed?"

"The Eastern slaves, fulfilling my commands, wait for my summons, where their eyes cannot see what we do. The danger is of a kind in which the boldest son of the East would be more craven, perhaps, that the daintiest Sybarite of Europe, who would shrink from a panther and laugh at a ghost. In the creed of the Dervish, and of all who adventure into that realm of Nature which is closed to philosophy and open to magic, there are races in the magnitude of space unseen as animalcules in the world of a drop. For the tribes of the drop science has its microscope. Of the host of yon azure Infinite magic gains sight, and through them gains command over fluid conductors that link all the parts of creation. Of these races, some are wholly indifferent to man, some benign to him, and some deadly hostile. In all the regular and prescribed conditions of mortal being, this magic realm seems as blank and tenantless as yon vacant air. But when a seeker of powers beyond the rude functions by which man plies the clockwork that measures his hours, and stops when its chain reaches the end of its coil, strives to pass over those boundaries at which philosophy says, 'Knowledge ends—then, he is like all other travelers in regions unknown; he must propitiate or brave the tribes that are hostile—must depend for his life on the tribes that are friendly. Though your science discredits the alchemist's dogmas, your learning informs you that all alchemists were not ignorant impostors; yet those whose discoveries prove them to have been the nearest allies to your practical knowledge, ever

hint in their mystical works at the reality of that realm which is open to magic—ever hint that some means less familiar than furnace and bellows are essential to him who explores the elixir of life. He who once quaffs that elixir, obtains in his very veins the bright fluid by which he transmits the force of his will to agencies dormant in Nature, to giants unseen in the space. And here, as he passes the boundary which divides his allotted and normal mortality from the regions and races that magic alone can explore, so, here, he breaks down the safeguard between himself and the tribes that are hostile. Is it not ever thus between man and man? Let a race the most gentle and timid and civilized dwell on one side a river or mountain, and another have home in the region beyond, each, if it pass not the intervening barrier, may with each live in peace. But if ambitious adventurers scale the mountain, or cross the river, with design to subdue and enslave the population they boldly invade, then all the invaded arise in wrath and defiance—the neighbors are changed into foes. And therefore this process—by which a simple though rare material of Nature is made to yield to a mortal the boon of a life which brings, with its glorious resistance to Time, desires and faculties to subject to its service beings that dwell in the earth and the air and the deep—has ever been one of the same peril which an invader must brave when he crosses the bounds of his nation. By this key alone you unlock all the cells of the alchemist's lore; by this alone understand how a labor, which a chemist's crudest apprentice could perform, has baffled the giant fathers of all your dwarfed children of science. Nature, that stores this priceless boon, seems to shrink from conceding it to man—the invisible tribes that abhor him oppose themselves to the gain that might give them a master. The duller of those who were the life-seekers of old would have told you how some chance, trivial, unlooked-for, foiled their grand hope at the very point of fruition; some doltish mistake, some improvident oversight, a defect in the sulphur, a wild overflow in the quicksilver, or a flaw in the bellows, or a pupil who

failed to replenish the fuel, by falling asleep by the furnace. The invisible foes seldom vouchsafe to make themselves visible where they can frustrate the bungler as they mock at his toils from their ambush. But the mightier adventurers, equally foiled in despite of their patience and skill, would have said, 'Not with us rests the fault; we neglected no caution, we failed from no oversight. But out from the caldron dread faces arose, and the specters or demons dismayed and baffled us.' Such, then, is the danger which seems so appalling to a son of the East, as it seemed to a seer in the dark age of Europe. But we can deride all its threats, you and I. For myself, I own frankly I take all the safety that the charms and resources of magic bestow. You, for your safety, have the cultured and disciplined reason which reduces all fantasies to nervous impressions; and I rely on the courage of one who has questioned, unquailing, the Luminous Shadow, and wrested from the hand of the magician himself the wand which concentered the wonders of will!"

To this strange and long discourse I listened without interruption, and now quietly answered:

"I do not merit the trust you affect in my courage; but I am now on my guard against the cheats of the fancy, and the fumes of a vapor can scarcely bewilder the brain in the open air of this mountain land. I believe in no races like those which you tell me lie viewless in space, as do gases. I believe not in magic; I ask not its aids, and I dread not its terrors. For the rest, I am confident of one mournful courage—the courage that comes from despair. I submit to your guidance, whatever it be, as a sufferer whom colleges doom to the grave submits to the quack who says, 'Take my specific and live!' My life is naught in itself; my life lives in another. You and I are both brave from despair; you would turn death from yourself—I would turn death from one I love more than myself. Both know how little aid we can win from the colleges, and both, therefore, turn to the promises most audaciously cheering. Dervish or magician, alchemist or phantom,

what care you and I? And if they fail us, what then? They cannot fail us more than the colleges do!"

V

The gold has been gained with an easy labor. I knew where to seek for it, whether under the turf or in the bed of the creek. But Margrave's eyes, hungrily gazing round every spot from which the ore was disburied, could not detect the substance of which he alone knew the outward appearance. I had begun to believe that, even in the description given to him of this material, he had been credulously duped, and that no such material existed, when, coming back from the bed of the watercourse, I saw a faint, yellow gleam amidst the roots of a giant parasite plant, the leaves and blossoms of which climbed up the sides of the cave with its antediluvian relics. The gleam was the gleam of gold, and on removing the loose earth round the roots of the plant, we came on— No, I will not, I dare not, describe it. The gold digger would cast it aside; the naturalist would pause not to heed it; and did I describe it, and chemistry deign to subject it to analysis, could chemistry alone detach or discover its boasted virtues?

Its particles, indeed, are very minute, not seeming readily to crystallize with each other; each in itself of uniform shape and size, spherical as the egg which contains the germ of life, and small as the egg from which the life of an insect may quicken.

But Margrave's keen eye caught sight of the atoms upcast by the light of the moon. He exclaimed to me, "Found! I shall live!" And then, as he gathered up the grains with tremulous hands, he called out to the Veiled Woman, hitherto still seated motionless on the crag. At his word she rose and went to the place hard by, where the fuel was piled, busying herself there. I had no leisure to heed her. I continued my search in the soft and yielding soil that time and the decay of vegetable life had accumu-

lated over the pre-Adamite strata on which the arch of the cave rested its mighty keystone.

When we had collected of these particles about thrice as much as a man might hold in his hand, we seemed to have exhausted their bed. We continued still to find gold, but no more of the delicate substance to which, in our sight, gold was as dross.

"Enough," then said Margrave, reluctantly desisting. "What we have gained already will suffice for a life thrice as long as legend attributes to Haroun. I shall live—I shall live through the centuries."

"Forget not that I claim my share."

"Your share—yours! True—your half of my life! It is true." He paused with a low, ironical, malignant laugh, and then added, as he rose and turned away, "But the work is yet to be done."

VI

While we had thus labored and found, Ayesha had placed the fuel where the moonlight fell fullest on the sward of the tableland—a part of it already piled as for a fire, the rest of it heaped confusedly close at hand; and by the pile she had placed the coffer. And there she stood, her arms folded under her mantle, her dark image seeming darker still as the moonlight whitened all the ground from which the image rose motionless. Margrave opened his coffer, the Veiled Woman did not aid him, and I watched in silence, while he as silently made his weird and wizard-like preparations.

VII

On the ground a wide circle was traced by a small rod, tipped apparently with sponge saturated with some combustible naphtha-like fluid, so that a pale, lambent flame followed the course of the rod as Margrave guided it, burning up the herbage over which it played, and leaving a

distinct ring, like that which, in our lovely native fable talk, we call the "Fairy's ring," but yet more visible because marked in phosphorescent light. On the ring thus formed were placed twelve small lamps, fed with the fluid from the same vessel, and lighted by the same rod. The light emitted by the lamps was more vivid and brilliant than that which circled round the ring.

Within the circumference, and immediately round the woodpile, Margrave traced certain geometrical figures, in which—not without a shudder, that I overcame at once by a strong effort of will in murmuring to myself the name of "Lilian"—I recognized the interlaced triangles which my own hand, in the spell enforced on a sleepwalker, had described on the floor of the wizard's pavilion. The figures were traced like the circle, in flame, and at the point of each triangle (four in number) was placed a lamp, brilliant as those on the ring. This task performed, the caldron, based on an iron tripod, was placed on the woodpile. And then the woman, before inactive and unheeding, slowly advanced, knelt by the pile and lighted it. The dry wood crackled and the flame burst forth, licking the rims of the caldron with tongues of fire.

Margrave flung into the caldron the particles we had collected, poured over them first a liquid, colorless as water, from the largest of the vessels drawn from his coffer, and then, more sparingly, drops from small crystal phials, like the phials I had seen in the hand of Philip Derval.

Having surmounted my first impulse of awe, I watched these proceedings, curious yet disdainful, as one who watches the mummeries of an enchanter on the stage.

"If," thought I, "these are but artful devices to inebriate and fool my own imagination, my imagination is on its guard, and reason shall not, this time, sleep at her post!"

"And now," said Margrave, "I consign to you the easy task by which you are to merit your share of the elixir. It is my task to feed and replenish the caldron; it is Ayesha's to feed the fire, which must not for a moment relax

in its measured and steady heat. Your task is the lightest of all: it is but to renew from this vessel the fluid that burns in the lamps, and on the ring. Observe, the contents of the vessel must be thriftily husbanded; there is enough, but not more than enough, to sustain the light in the lamps, on the lines traced round the caldron, and on the farther ring, for six hours. The compounds dissolved in this fluid are scarce—only obtainable in the East, and even in the East months might have passed before I could have increased my supply. I had no months to waste. Replenish, then, the light only when it begins to flicker or fade. Take heed, above all, that no part of the outer ring—no, not an inch—and no lamp of the twelve, that are to its zodiac like stars, fade for one moment in darkness."

I took the crystal vessel from his hand.

"The vessel is small," said I, "and what is yet left of its contents is but scanty; whether its drops suffice to replenish the lights I cannot guess—I can but obey your instructions. But, more important by far than the light to the lamps and the circle, which in Asia or Africa might scare away the wild beasts unknown to this land—more important than light to a lamp is the strength to your frame, weak magician! What will support you through six weary hours of night watch?"

"Hope," answered Margrave, with a ray of his old dazzling style. "Hope! I shall live—I shall live through the centuries!"

VIII

One hour passed away; the fagots under the caldron burned clear in the sullen, sultry air. The materials within began to seethe, and their color, at first dull and turbid, changed into a pale-rose hue; from time to time the Veiled Woman replenished the fire, after she had done so reseating herself close by the pyre, with her head bowed over her knees, and her face hid under her veil.

The lights in the lamps and along the ring and the tri-

angles now began to pale. I resupplied their nutriment from the crystal vessel. As yet nothing strange startled my eye or my ear beyond the rim of the circle—nothing audible, save, at a distance, the musical wheel-like click of the locusts, and, farther still, in the forest, the howl of the wild dogs that never bark; nothing visible, but the trees and the mountain range girding the plains silvered by the moon, and the arch of the cavern, the flush of wild blooms on its sides, and the gleam of dry bones on its floor, where the moonlight shot into the gloom.

The second hour passed like the first. I had taken my stand by the side of Margrave, watching with him the process at work in the caldron, when I felt the ground slightly vibrate beneath my feet, and looking up, it seemed as if all the plains beyond the circle were heaving like the swell of the sea, and as if in the air itself there was a perceptible tremor.

I placed my hand on Margrave's shoulder and whispered, "To me earth and air seem to vibrate. Do they seem to vibrate to you?"

"I know not, I care not," he answered impetuously. "The essence is bursting the shell that confined it. Here are my air and my earth! Trouble me not. Look to the circle—feed the lamps if they fail!"

I passed by the Veiled Woman as I walked toward a place in the ring in which the flame was waning dim; and I whispered to her the same question which I had whispered to Margrave. She looked slowly around and answered, "So is it before the Invisible make themselves visible! Did I not bid him forbear?" Her head again drooped on her breast, and her watch was again fixed on the fire.

I advanced to the circle and stooped to replenish the light where it waned. As I did so, on my arm, which stretched somewhat beyond the line of the ring, I felt a shock like that of electricity. The arm fell to my side numbed and nerveless, and from my hand dropped, but within the ring, the vessel that contained the fluid. Re-

covering my surprise or my stun, hastily with the other hand I caught up the vessel, but some of the scanty liquid was already spilled on the sward; and I saw with a thrill of dismay, that contrasted indeed the tranquil indifference with which I had first undertaken my charge, how small a supply was now left.

I went back to Margrave, and told him of the shock, and of its consequence in the waste of the liquid.

"Beware," said he, "that not a motion of the arm, not an inch of the foot, pass the verge of the ring; and if the fluid be thus unhappily stinted, reserve all that is left for the protecting circle and the twelve outer lamps! See how the Grand Work advances, how the hues in the caldron are glowing blood-red through the film on the surface!"

And now four hours of the six were gone; my arm had gradually recovered its strength. Neither the ring nor the lamps had again required replenishing; perhaps their light was exhausted less quickly, as it was no longer to be exposed to the rays of the intense Australian moon. Clouds had gathered over the sky, and though the moon gleamed at times in the gaps that they left in blue air, her beam was more hazy and dulled. The locusts no longer were heard in the grass, nor the howl of the dogs in the forest. Out of the circle, the stillness was profound.

And about this time I saw distinctly in the distance a vast Eye. It drew nearer and nearer, seeming to move from the ground at the height of some lofty giant. Its gaze riveted mine; my blood curdled in the blaze from its angry ball; and now as it advanced larger and larger, other Eyes, as if of giants in its train, grew out from the space in its rear—numbers on numbers, like the spearheads of some Eastern army, seen afar by pale warders of battlements doomed to the dust. My voice long refused an utterance to my awe; at length it burst forth shrill and loud:

"Look, look! Those terrible Eyes! Legions on legions. And hark! that tramp of numberless feet; *they* are not seen, but the hollows of earth echo the sound of their march!"

Margrave, more than ever intent on the caldron, in which, from time to time, he kept dropping powders or essences drawn forth from his coffer, looked up, defyingly, fiercely:

"Ye come," he said in a low mutter, his once mighty voice sounding hollow and laboring, but fearless and firm—"ye come—not to conquer, vain rebels!—ye whose dark chief I struck down at my feet in the tomb where my spell had raised up the ghost of your first human master, the Chaldee! Earth and air have their armies still faithful to me, and still I remember the war song that summons them up to confront you! Ayesha, Ayesha! recall the wild troth that we pledged among the roses; recall the dread bond by which we united our sway over hosts that yet own thee as queen, though my scepter is broken, my diadem reft from my brows!"

The Veiled Woman rose at this adjuration. Her veil now was withdrawn, and the blaze of the fire between Margrave and herself flushed, as with the rosy bloom of youth, the grand beauty of her softened face. It was seen, detached, as it were, from her dark-mantled form; seen through the mist of the vapors which rose from the caldron, framing it round like the clouds that are yieldingly pierced by the light of the evening star.

Through the haze of the vapor came her voice, more musical, more plaintive than I had heard it before, but far softer, more tender: still in her foreign tongue; the words unknown to me, and yet their sense, perhaps, made intelligible by the love, which has one common language and one common look to all who have loved—the love unmistakably heard in the loving tone, unmistakably seen in the loving face.

A moment or so more and she had come round from the opposite side of the fire pile, and bending over Margrave's upturned brow, kissed it quietly, solemnly; and then her countenance grew fierce, her crest rose erect: it was the lioness protecting her young. She stretched forth her arm from the black mantle, athwart the pale front that now

again bent over the caldron—stretched it toward the haunted and hollow-sounding space beyond, in the gesture of one whose right hand has the sway of the scepter. And then her voice stole on the air in the music of a chant, not loud yet far-reaching; so thrilling, so sweet and yet so solemn that I could at once comprehend how legend united of old the spell of enchantment with the power of song. All that I recalled of the effects which, in the former time, Margrave's strange chants had produced on the ear that they ravished and the thoughts they confused, was but as the wild bird's imitative carol, compared to the depth and the art and the soul of the singer, whose voice seemed endowed with a charm to inthrall all the tribes of creation, though the language it used for that charm might to them, as to me, be unknown. As the song ceased, I heard from behind sounds like those I had heard in the spaces before me—the tramp of invisible feet, the whir of invisible wings, as if armies were marching to aid against armies in march to destroy.

"Look not in front nor around," said Ayesha. "Look, like him, on the caldron below. The circle and the lamps are yet bright; I will tell you when the light again fails."

I dropped my eyes on the caldron.

"See," whispered Margrave, "the sparkles at last begin to arise, and the rose hues to deepen—signs that we near the last process."

IX

The fifth hour had passed away, when Ayesha said to me, "Lo! the circle is fading; the lamps grow dim. Look now without fear on the space beyond; the eyes that appalled thee are again lost in air, as lightnings that fleet back into cloud."

I looked up, and the specters had vanished. The sky was tinged with sulphurous hues, the red and the black intermixed. I replenished the lamps and the ring in front, thriftily, heedfully; but when I came to the sixth lamp,

not a drop in the vessel that fed them was left. In a vague dismay, I now looked round the half of the wide circle in rear of the two bended figures intent on the caldron. All along that disk the light was already broken, here and there flickering up, here and there dying down; the six lamps in that half of the circle still twinkled, but faintly, as stars shrinking fast from the dawn of day. But it was not the fading shine in that half of the magical ring which daunted my eye and quickened with terror the pulse of my heart; the Bush-land beyond was on fire. From the background of the forest rose the flame and the smoke—the smoke, there, still half smothering the flame. But along the width of the grasses and herbage, between the verge of the forest and the bed of the water creek just below the raised platform from which I beheld the dread conflagration, the fire was advancing—wave upon wave, clear and red against the columns of rock behind; as the rush of a flood through the mists of some Alp crowned with lightnings.

Roused from my stun at the first sight of a danger not foreseen by the mind I had steeled against far rarer portents of Nature, I cared no more for the lamps and the circle. Hurrying back to Ayesha, I exclaimed: "The phantoms have gone from the spaces in front; but what incantation or spell can arrest the red march of the foe speeding on in the rear! While we gazed on the caldron of life, behind us, unheeded, behold the Destroyer!"

Ayesha looked and made no reply, but, as by involuntary instinct, bowed her majestic head, then rearing it erect, placed herself yet more immediately before the wasted form of the young magician (he still bending over the caldron, and hearing me not in the absorption and hope of his watch)—placed herself before him, as the bird whose first care is her fledgling.

As we two there stood, fronting the deluge of fire, we heard Margrave behind us, murmuring low, "See the bubbles of light, how they sparkle and dance—I shall live, I shall live!" And his words scarcely died in our ears before, crash upon crash, came the fall of the age-long trees

in the forest, and nearer, all near us, through the blazing grasses, the hiss of the serpents, the scream of the birds, and the bellow and tramp of the herds plunging wild through the billowy red of their pastures.

Ayesha now wound her arms around Margrave, and wrenched him, reluctant and struggling, from his watch over the seething caldron. In rebuke of his angry exclamations, she pointed to the march of the fire, spoke in sorrowful tones a few words in her own language, and then, appealing to me in English, said:

"I tell him that, here, the Spirits who oppose us have summoned a foe that is deaf to my voice, and——"

"And," exclaimed Margrave, no longer with gasp and effort, but with the swell of a voice which drowned all the discords of terror and of agony sent forth from the Phlegethon burning below—"and this witch, whom I trusted, is a vile slave and impostor, more desiring my death than my life. She thinks that in life I should scorn and forsake her, that in death I should die in her arms! Sorceress, avaunt! Art thou useless and powerless now when I need thee most? Go! Let the world be one funeral pyre! What to *me* is the world? My world is my life! Thou knowest that my last hope is here—that all the strength left me this night will die down, like the lamps in the circle, unless the elixir restore it. Bold friend, spurn that sorceress away. Hours yet ere those flames can assail us! A few minutes more, and life to your Lilian and me!"

Thus having said, Margrave turned from us, and cast into the caldron the last essence yet left in his empty coffer.

Ayesha silently drew her black veil over her face, and turned, with the being she loved, from the terror he scorned, to share in the hope that he cherished.

Thus left alone, with my reason disinthralled, disenchanted, I surveyed more calmly the extent of the actual peril with which we were threatened, and the peril seemed less, so surveyed.

It is true all the Bush-land behind, almost up to the

bed of the creek, was on fire; but the grasses, through which the flame spread so rapidly, ceased at the opposite marge of the creek. Watery pools were still, at intervals, left in the bed of the creek, shining tremulous, like waves of fire, in the glare reflected from the burning land; and even where the water failed, the stony course of the exhausted rivulet was a barrier against the march of the conflagration. Thus, unless the wind, now still, should rise, and waft some sparks to the parched combustible herbage immediately around us, we were saved from the fire, and our work might yet be achieved.

I whispered to Ayesha the conclusion to which I came.

"Thinkest thou," she answered without raising her mournful head, "that the Agencies of Nature are the movements of chance? The Spirits I invoked to his aid are leagued with the hosts that assail. A mightier than I am has doomed him!"

Scarcely had she uttered these words before Margrave exclaimed, "Behold how the Rose of the alchemist's dream enlarges its blooms from the folds of its petals! I shall live, I shall live!"

I looked, and the liquid which glowed in the caldron had now taken a splendor that mocked all comparisons borrowed from the luster of gems. In its prevalent color it had, indeed, the dazzle and flash of the ruby; but out from the mass of the molten red, broke coruscations of all prismal hues, shooting, shifting, in a play that made the wavelets themselves seem living things, sensible of their joy. No longer was there scum or film upon the surface; only ever and anon a light, rosy vapor floating up, and quick lost in the haggard, heavy, sulphurous air, hot with the conflagration rushing toward us from behind. And these coruscations formed, on the surface of the molten ruby, literally the shape of a rose, its leaves made distinct in their outlines by sparks of emerald and diamond and sapphire.

Even while gazing on this animated liquid luster, a buoyant delight seemed infused into my senses; all terrors

conceived before were annulled; the phantoms, whose armies had filled the wide spaces in front, were forgotten; the crash of the forest behind was unheard. In the reflection of that glory, Margrave's wan cheek seemed already restored to the radiance it wore when I saw it first in the framework of blooms.

As I gazed, thus enchanted, a cold hand touched my own.

"Hush!" whispered Ayesha, from the black veil, against which the rays of the caldron fell blunt, and absorbed into Dark. "Behind us, the light of the circle is extinct; but there, we are guarded from all save the brutal and soulless destroyers. But, before!—but, before!—see, two of the lamps have died out!—see the blank of the gap in the ring! Guard that breach—there the demons will enter."

"Not a drop is there left in this vessel by which to replenish the lamps on the ring."

"Advance, then; thou hast still the light of the soul, and the demons may recoil before a soul that is dauntless and guiltless. If not, Three are lost!—as it is, One is doomed."

Thus adjured, silently, involuntarily, I passed from the Veiled Woman's side, over the sear lines on the turf which had been traced by the triangles of light long since extinguished, and toward the verge of the circle. As I advanced, overhead rushed a dark cloud of wings—birds dislodged from the forest on fire, and screaming, in dissonant terror, as they flew toward the farthermost mountains; close by my feet hissed and glided the snakes, driven forth from their blazing coverts, and glancing through the ring, unscared by its waning lamps; all undulating by me, bright-eyed, and hissing, all made innocuous by fear—even the terrible Death-adder, which I trampled on as I halted at the verge of the circle, did not turn to bite, but crept harmless away. I halted at the gap between the two dead lamps, and bowed my head to look again into the crystal vessel. Were there, indeed, no lingering drops

yet left, if but to recruit the lamps for some priceless minutes more? As I thus stood, right into the gap between the two dead lamps strode a gigantic Foot. All the rest of the form was unseen; only, as volume after volume of smoke poured on from the burning land behind, it seemed as if one great column of vapor, eddying round, settled itself aloft from the circle, and that out from that column strode the giant Foot. And, as strode the Foot, so with it came, like the sound of its tread, a roll of muttered thunder.

I recoiled, with a cry that rang loud through the lurid air.

"Courage!" said the voice of Ayesha. "Trembling soul, yield not an inch to the demon!"

At the charm, the wonderful charm, in the tone of the Veiled Woman's voice, my will seemed to take a force more sublime than its own. I folded my arms on my breast, and stood as if rooted to the spot, confronting the column of smoke and the stride of the giant Foot. And the Foot halted, mute.

Again, in the momentary hush of that suspense, I heard a voice—it was Margrave's.

"The last hour expires—the work is accomplished! Come! come! Aid me to take the caldron from the fire; and, quick!—or a drop may be wasted in vapor—the Elixir of Life from the caldron!"

At that cry I receded, and the Foot advanced.

And at that moment, suddenly, unawares, from behind, I was stricken down. Over me, as I lay, swept a whirlwind of trampling hoofs and glancing horns. The herds, in their flight from the burning pastures, had rushed over the bed of the water course, scaled the slopes of the banks. Snorting and bellowing, they plunged their blind way to the mountains. One cry alone, more wild than their own savage blare, pierced the reek through which the Brute Hurricane swept. At that cry of wrath and despair I struggled to rise, again dashed to earth by the hoofs and the horns. But was it the dreamlike deceit of my reel-

ing senses, or did I see that giant Foot stride past through the close-serried ranks of the maddening herds? Did I hear, distinct through all the huge uproar of animal terror, the roll of low thunder which followed the stride of that Foot?

X

When my sense had recovered its shock, and my eyes looked dizzily round, the charge of the beasts had swept by; and of all the wild tribes which had invaded the magical circle, the only lingerer was the brown Death-adder, coiled close by the spot where my head had rested. Beside the extinguished lamps which the hoofs had confusedly scattered, the fire, arrested by the water course, had consumed the grasses that fed it, and there the plains stretched black and desert as the Phlegræan Field of the Poet's Hell. But the fire still raged in the forest beyond—white flames, soaring up from the trunks of the tallest trees, and forming, through the sullen dark of the smoke reek, innumerable pillars of fire, like the halls in the city of fiends.

Gathering myself up, I turned my eyes from the terrible pomp of the lurid forest, and looked fearfully down on the hoof-trampled sward for my two companions.

I saw the dark image of Ayesha still seated, still bending, as I had seen it last. I saw a pale hand feebly grasping the rim of the magical caldron, which lay, hurled down from its tripod by the rush of the beasts, yards away from the dim, fading embers of the scattered wood pyre. I saw the faint writhings of a frail, wasted frame, over which the Veiled Woman was bending. I saw, as I moved with bruised limbs to the place, close by the lips of the dying magician, the flash of the rubylike essence spilled on the sward, and, meteor-like, sparkling up from the torn tufts of herbage.

I now reached Margrave's side. Bending over him as the Veiled Woman bent, and as I sought gently to raise him, he turned his face, fiercely faltering out, "Touch me

not, rob me not! *You* share with me! Never, never! These glorious drops are all mine! Die all else! I will live, I will live!" Writhing himself from my pitying arms, he plunged his face amidst the beautiful, playful flame of the essence, as if to lap the elixir with lips scorched away from its intolerable burning. Suddenly, with a low shriek, he fell back, his face upturned to mine, and on that face unmistakably reigned Death.

Then Ayesha tenderly, silently, drew the young head to her lap, and it vanished from my sight behind her black veil.

I knelt beside her, murmuring some trite words of comfort; but she heeded me not, rocking herself to and fro as the mother who cradles a child to sleep. Soon the fast-flickering sparkles of the lost elixir died out on the grass; and with their last sportive diamond-like tremble of light, up, in all the suddenness of Australian day, rose the sun, lifting himself royally above the mountain tops, and fronting the meaner blaze of the forest as a young king fronts his rebels. And as there, where the bush fires had ravaged, all was a desert, so there, where their fury had not spread, all was a garden. Afar, at the foot of the mountains, the fugitive herds were grazing; the cranes, flocking back to the pools, renewed the strange grace of their gambols; and the great kingfisher, whose laugh, half in mirth, half in mockery, leads the choir that welcome the morn—which in Europe is night—alighted bold on the roof of the cavern, whose floors were still white with the bones of races, extinct before—so helpless through instincts, so royal through Soul—rose MAN!

But there, on the ground where the dazzling elixir had wasted its virtues—there the herbage already had a freshness of verdure which, amid the duller sward round it, was like an oasis of green in a desert. And, there, wild flowers, whose chill hues the eye would have scarcely distinguished the day before, now glittered forth in blooms of unfamiliar beauty. Toward that spot were attracted myriads of happy insects, whose hum of intense joy was

musically loud. But the form of the life-seeking sorcerer lay rigid and stark; blind to the bloom of the wild flowers, deaf to the glee of the insects—one hand still resting heavily on the rim of the emptied caldron, and the face still hid behind the Black Veil. What! the wondrous elixir, sought with such hope and well-nigh achieved through such dread, fleeting back to the earth from which its material was drawn to give bloom, indeed—but to herbs; joy indeed—but to insects!

And now, in the flash of the sun, slowly wound up the slopes that led to the circle, the same barbaric procession which had sunk into the valley under the ray of the moon. The armed men came first, stalwart and tall, their vests brave with crimson and golden lace, their weapons gayly gleaming with holiday silver. After them, the Black Litter. As they came to the place, Ayesha, not raising her head, spoke to them in her own Eastern tongue. A wail was her answer. The armed men bounded forward, and the bearers left the litter.

All gathered round the dead form with the face concealed under the Black Veil; all knelt, and all wept. Far in the distance, at the foot of the blue mountains, a crowd of the savage natives had risen up as if from the earth; they stood motionless leaning on their clubs and spears, and looking toward the spot on which we were—strangely thus brought into the landscape, as if they too, the wild dwellers on the verge which Humanity guards from the Brute, were among the mourners for the mysterious Child of mysterious Nature! And still, in the herbage, hummed the small insects, and still, from the cavern, laughed the great kingfisher. I said to Ayesha, "Farewell! your love mourns the dead, mine calls me to the living. You are now with your own people, they may console you—say if I can assist."

"There is no consolation for me! What mourner can be consoled if the dead die forever? Nothing for him is left but a grave; that grave shall be in the land where the song of Ayesha first lulled him to sleep. Thou assist

ME—thou, the wise man of Europe! From me ask assistance. What road wilt thou take to thy home?"

"There is but one road known to me through the maze of the solitude—that which we took to this upland."

"On that road Death lurks, and awaits thee! Blind dupe, couldst thou think that if the grand secret of life had been won, he whose head rests on my lap would have yielded thee one petty drop of the essence which had filched from his store of life but a moment? Me, who so loved and so cherished him—me he would have doomed to the pitiless cord of my servant, the Strangler, if my death could have lengthened a hairbreadth the span of his being. But what matters to me his crime or his madness? I loved him, I loved him!"

She bowed her veiled head lower and lower; perhaps under the veil her lips kissed the lips of the dead. Then she said whisperingly:

"Juma the Strangler, whose word never failed to his master, whose prey never slipped from his snare, waits thy step on the road to thy home! But thy death cannot now profit the dead, the beloved. And thou hast had pity for him who took but thine aid to design thy destruction. His life is lost, thine is saved!"

She spoke no more in the tongue that I could interpret. She spoke, in the language unknown, a few murmured words to her swarthy attendants; then the armed men, still weeping, rose, and made a dumb sign to me to go with them. I understood by the sign that Ayesha had told them to guard me on my way; but she gave no reply to my parting thanks.

XI

I DESCENDED into the valley; the armed men followed. The path, on that side of the water course not reached by the flames, wound through meadows still green, or amidst groves still unscathed. As a turning in the way brought

in front of my sight the place I had left behind, I beheld the black litter creeping down the descent, with its curtains closed, and the Veiled Woman walking by its side. But soon the funeral procession was lost to my eyes, and the thoughts that it roused were erased. The waves in man's brain are like those of the sea, rushing on, rushing over the wrecks of the vessels that rode on their surface, to sink, after storm, in their deeps. One thought cast forth into the future now mastered all in the past: "Was Lilian living still?" Absorbed in the gloom of that thought, hurried on by the goad that my heart, in its tortured impatience, gave to my footstep, I outstripped the slow stride of the armed men, and, midway between the place I had left and the home which I sped to, came, far in advance of my guards, into the thicket in which the Bushmen had started up in my path on the night that Lilian had watched for my coming. The earth at my feet was rife with creeping plants and many-colored flowers, the sky overhead was half hid by motionless pines. Suddenly, whether crawling out from the herbage or dropping down from the trees, by my side stood the white-robed and skeleton form—Ayesha's attendant the Strangler.

I sprang from him shuddering, then halted and faced him. The hideous creature crept toward me, cringing and fawning, making signs of humble goodwill and servile obeisance. Again I recoiled—wrathfully, loathingly, turned my face homeward, and fled on. I thought I had baffled his chase, when, just at the mouth of the thicket, he dropped from a bough in my path close behind me. Before I could turn, some dark muffling substance fell between my sight and the sun, and I felt a fierce strain at my throat. But the words of Ayesha had warned me; with one rapid hand I seized the noose before it could tighten too closely, with the other I tore the bandage away from my eyes, and, wheeling round on the dastardly foe, struck him down with one spurn of my foot. His hand, as he fell, relaxed its hold on the noose; I freed my throat from the knot, and sprang from the copse into the broad

sunlit plain. I saw no more of the armed men or the Strangler. Panting and breathless, I paused at last before the fence, fragrant with blossoms, that divided my home from the solitude.

The windows of Lilian's room were darkened; all within the house seemed still.

Darkened and silenced home, with the light and sounds of the jocund day all around it. Was there yet hope in the Universe for me? All to which I had trusted Hope had broken down; the anchors I had forged for her hold in the beds of the ocean, her stay from the drifts of the storm, had snapped like the reeds which pierce the side that leans on the barb of their points, and confides in the strength of their stems. No hope in the baffled resources of recognized knowledge! No hope in the daring adventures of Mind into regions unknown; vain alike the calm lore of the practiced physician, and the magical arts of the fated Enchanter! I had fled from the commonplace teachings of Nature, to explore in her Shadowland marvels at variance with reason. Made brave by the grandeur of love, I had opposed without quailing the stride of the Demon, and my hope, when fruition seemed nearest, had been trodden into dust by the hoofs of the beast! And yet, all the while, I had scorned, as a dream, more wild than the word of a sorcerer, the hope that the old man and the child, the wise and the ignorant, took from their souls as inborn. Man and fiend had alike failed a mind, not ignoble, not skill-less, not abjectly craven; alike failed a heart not feeble and selfish, not dead to the hero's devotion, willing to shed every drop of its blood for a something more dear than an animal's life for itself! What remained—what remained for man's hope?—man's mind and man's heart thus exhausting their all with no other result but despair! What remained but the mystery of mysteries, so clear to the sunrise of childhood, the sunset of age, only dimmed by the clouds which collect round the noon of our manhood? Where yet was Hope found? In the soul; in its every-day impulse to supplicate com-

fort and light, from the Giver of soul, wherever the heart is afflicted, the mind is obscured.

Then the words of Ayesha rushed over me: "What mourner can be consoled, if the dead die forever?" Through every pulse of my frame throbbed that dread question; all Nature around seemed to murmur it. And suddenly, as by a flash from heaven, the grand truth in Faber's grand reasoning shone on me, and lighted up all, within and without. Man alone, of all earthly creatures, asks, "Can the dead die forever?" and the instinct that urges the question is God's answer to man. No instinct is given in vain.

And born with the instinct of soul is the instinct that leads the soul from the seen to the unseen, from time to eternity, from the torrent that foams toward the Ocean of Death, to the source of its stream, far aloft from the Ocean.

"Know thyself," said the Pythian of old. "That precept descended from Heaven." Know thyself! Is that maxim wise? If so, know thy soul. But never yet did man come to the thorough conviction of soul but what he acknowledged the sovereign necessity of prayer. In my awe, in my rapture, all my thoughts seemed enlarged and illumed and exalted. I prayed—all my soul seemed one prayer. All my past, with its pride and presumption and folly, grew distinct as the form of a penitent, kneeling for pardon before setting forth on the pilgrimage vowed to a shrine. And, sure now, in the deeps of a soul first revealed to myself, that the Dead do not die forever, my human love soared beyond its brief trial of terror and sorrow. Daring not to ask from Heaven's wisdom that Lilian, for my sake, might not yet pass away from the earth, I prayed that my soul might be fitted to bear with submission whatever my Maker might ordain. And if surviving her—without whom no beam from yon material sun could ever warm into joy a morrow in human life—so to guide my steps that they might rejoin her at last, and in rejoining, regain forever!

How trivial now became the weird riddle, that, a little while before, had been clothed in so solemn an awe! What mattered it to the vast interests involved in the clear recognition of Soul and Hereafter, whether or not my bodily sense, for a moment, obscured the face of the Nature I should one day behold as a spirit? Doubtless the sights and the sounds which had haunted the last gloomy night, the calm reason of Faber would strip of their magical seemings; the Eyes in the space and the Foot in the circle might be those of no terrible Demons, but of the wild's savage children whom I had seen, halting, curious and mute, in the light of the morning. The tremor of the ground (if not, as heretofore, explicable by the illusory impression of my own treacherous senses) might be but the natural effect of elements struggling yet under a soil unmistakably charred by volcanoes. The luminous atoms dissolved in the caldron might as little be fraught with a vital elixir as are the splendors of naphtha or phosphor. As it was, the weird rite had no magic result. The magician was not rent limb from limb by the fiends. By causes as natural as ever extinguished life's spark in the frail lamp of clay, he had died out of sight—under the black veil.

What mattered henceforth to Faith, in its far grander questions and answers, whether Reason, in Faber, or Fancy, in me, supplied the more probable guess at a hieroglyph which, if construed aright, was but a word of small mark in the mystical language of Nature? If all the arts of enchantment recorded by Fable were attested by facts which Sages were forced to acknowledge, Sages would sooner or later find some cause for such portents—not supernatural. But what Sage, without cause supernatural, both without and within him, can guess at the wonders he views in the growth of a blade of grass, or the tints on an insect's wing? Whatever art Man can achieve in his progress through time, Man's reason, in time, can suffice to explain. But the wonders of God? These belong to the Infinite; and these, O Immortal! will but develop new

wonder on wonder, though thy sight be a spirit's, and thy leisure to track and to solve an eternity.

As I raised my face from my clasped hands, my eyes fell full upon a form standing in the open doorway. There, where on the night in which Lilian's long struggle for reason and life had begun, the Luminous Shadow had been beheld in the doubtful light of a dying moon and a yet hazy dawn; there, on the threshold, gathering round her bright locks the aureole of the glorious sun, stood Amy, the blessed child! And as I gazed, drawing nearer and nearer to the silenced house, and that Image of Peace on its threshold, I felt that Hope met me at the door—Hope in the child's steadfast eyes, Hope in the child's welcoming smile!

"I was at watch for you," whispered Amy. "All is well."

"She lives still—she lives! Thank God, thank God!"

"She lives—she will recover!" said another voice, as my head sunk on Faber's shoulder. "For some hours in the night her sleep was disturbed, convulsed. I feared, then, the worst. Suddenly, just before the dawn, she called out aloud, still in sleep:

"'The cold and dark shadow has passed away from me and from Allen—passed away from us both forever!'

"And from that moment the fever left her; the breathing became soft, the pulse steady, and the color stole gradually back to her cheek. The crisis is past. Nature's benign Disposer has permitted Nature to restore your life's gentle partner, heart to heart, mind to mind——"

"And soul to soul," I cried in my solemn joy. "Above as below, soul to soul!" Then, at a sign from Faber, the child took me by the hand and led me up the stairs into Lilian's room.

Again those dear arms closed around me in wifelike and holy love, and those true lips kissed away my tears—even as now, at the distance of years from that happy morn, while I write the last words of this Strange Story, the same faithful arms close around me, the same tender lips kiss away my tears.

Thomas De Quincey

The Avenger

"Why callest thou me murderer, and not rather the wrath of God burning after the steps of the oppressor, and cleansing the earth when it is wet with blood?"

THAT series of terrific events by which our quiet city and university in the northeastern quarter of Germany were convulsed during the year 1816, has in itself, and considered merely as a blind movement of human tiger-passion ranging unchained among men, something too memorable to be forgotten or left without its own separate record; but the moral lesson impressed by these events is yet more memorable, and deserves the deep attention of coming generations in their struggle after human improvement, not merely in its own limited field of interest directly awakened, but in all analogous fields of interest; as in fact already, and more than once, in connection with these very events, this lesson has obtained the effectual attention of Christian kings and princes assembled in congress. No tragedy, indeed, among all the sad ones by which the charities of the human heart or of the fireside have ever been outraged, can better merit a separate chapter in the private history of German manners or social life than this unparalleled case. And, on the other hand, no one can put in a better claim to be the historian than myself.

I was at the time, and still am, a professor in that city and university which had the melancholy distinction of being its theater. I knew familiarly all the parties who were concerned in it, either as sufferers or as agents. I was present from first to last, and watched the whole course of the mysterious storm which fell upon our devoted city in a strength like that of a West Indian hurricane, and

which did seriously threaten at one time to depopulate our university, through the dark suspicions which settled upon its members, and the natural reaction of generous indignation in repelling them; while the city in its more stationary and native classes would very soon have manifested *their* awful sense of things, of the hideous insecurity for life, and of the unfathomable dangers which had undermined their hearths below their very feet, by sacrificing, whenever circumstances allowed them, their houses and beautiful gardens in exchange for days uncursed by panic, and nights unpolluted by blood. Nothing, I can take upon myself to assert, was left undone of all that human foresight could suggest, or human ingenuity could accomplish. But observe the melancholy result: the more certain did these arrangements strike people as remedies for the evil, so much the more effectually did they aid the terror, but, above all, the awe, the sense of mystery, when ten cases of total extermination, applied to separate households, had occurred, in every one of which these precautionary aids had failed to yield the slightest assistance. The horror, the perfect frenzy of fear, which seized upon the town after that experience, baffles all attempt at description. Had these various contrivances failed merely in some human and intelligible way, as by bringing the aid too tardily—still, in such cases, though the danger would no less have been evidently deepened, nobody would have felt any further mystery than what, from the very first, rested upon the persons and the motives of the murderers. But, as it was, when, in ten separate cases of exterminating carnage, the astounded police, after an examination the most searching, pursued from day to day, and almost exhausting the patience by the minuteness of the investigation, had finally pronounced that no attempt apparently had been made to benefit by any of the signals preconcerted, that no footstep apparently had moved in that direction—then, and after that result, a blind misery of fear fell upon the population, so much the worse than any anguish of a beleaguered city that is awaiting the storming fury of a victorious enemy,

by how much the shadowy, the uncertain, the infinite, is at all times more potent in mastering the mind than a danger that is known, measurable, palpable, and human. The very police, instead of offering protection or encouragement, were seized with terror for themselves. And the general feeling, as it was described to me by a grave citizen whom I met in a morning walk (for the overmastering sense of a public calamity broke down every barrier of reserve, and all men talked freely to all men in the streets, as they would have done during the rockings of an earthquake), was, even among the boldest, like that which sometimes takes possession of the mind in dreams—when one feels oneself sleeping alone, utterly divided from all call or hearing of friends, doors open that should be shut, or unlocked that should be triply secured, the very walls gone, barriers swallowed up by unknown abysses, nothing around one but frail curtains, and a world of illimitable night, whisperings at a distance, correspondence going on between darkness and darkness, like one deep calling to another, and the dreamer's own heart the center from which the whole network of this unimaginable chaos radiates, by means of which the blank *privations* of silence and darkness become powers the most *positive* and awful.

Agencies of fear, as of any other passion, and, above all, of passion felt in communion with thousands, and in which the heart beats in conscious sympathy with an entire city, through all its regions of high and low, young and old, strong and weak; such agencies avail to raise and transfigure the natures of men; mean minds become elevated; dull men become eloquent; and when matters came to this crisis, the public feeling, as made known by voice, gesture, manner, or words, was such that no stranger could represent it to his fancy. In that respect, therefore, I had an advantage, being upon the spot through the whole course of the affair, for giving a faithful narrative; as I had still more eminently, from the sort of central station which I occupied, with respect to all the movements of the case. I may add that I had another advantage, not possessed, or

not in the same degree, by any other inhabitant of the town. I was personally acquainted with every family of the slightest account belonging to the resident population; whether among the old local gentry, or the new settlers whom the late wars had driven to take refuge within our walls.

It was in September, 1815, that I received a letter from the chief secretary to the Prince of M——, a nobleman connected with the diplomacy of Russia, from which I quote an extract: "I wish, in short, to recommend to your attentions, and in terms stronger than I know how to devise, a young man on whose behalf the czar himself is privately known to have expressed the very strongest interest. He was at the battle of Waterloo as an aide-de-camp to a Dutch general officer, and is decorated with distinctions won upon that awful day. However, though serving in that instance under English orders, and although an Englishman of rank, he does not belong to the English military service. He has served, young as he is, under *various* banners, and under ours, in particular, in the cavalry of our imperial guard. He is English by birth, nephew to the Earl of E., and heir presumptive to his immense estates. There is a wild story current, that his mother was a gypsy of transcendent beauty, which may account for his somewhat Moorish complexion, though, after all, *that* is not of a deeper tinge than I have seen among many an Englishman. He is himself one of the noblest looking of God's creatures. Both father and mother, however, are now dead. Since then he has become the favorite of his uncle, who detained him in England after the emperor had departed—and, as this uncle is now in the last stage of infirmity, Mr. Wyndham's succession to the vast family estates is inevitable, and probably near at hand. Meantime, he is anxious for some assistance in his studies. Intellectually he stands in the very first rank of men, as I am sure you will not be slow to discover; but his long military service, and the unparalleled tumult of our European history since 1805, have interfered (as you may suppose) with

the cultivation of his mind; for he entered the cavalry service of a German power when a mere boy, and shifted about from service to service as the hurricane of war blew from this point or from that. During the French anabasis to Moscow he entered our service, made himself a prodigious favorite with the whole imperial family, and even now is only in his twenty-second year. As to his accomplishments, they will speak for themselves; they are infinite, and applicable to every situation of life. Greek is what he wants from you;—never ask about terms. He will acknowledge any trouble he may give you, as he acknowledges all trouble, *en prince*. And ten years hence you will look back with pride upon having contributed your part to the formation of one whom all here at St. Petersburg, not soldiers only, but we *diplomates*, look upon as certain to prove a great man, and a leader among the intellects of Christendom."

Two or three other letters followed; and at length it was arranged that Mr. Maximilian Wyndham should take up his residence at my monastic abode for one year. He was to keep a table, and an establishment of servants, at his own cost; was to have an apartment of some dozen or so of rooms; the unrestricted use of the library; with some other public privileges willingly conceded by the magistracy of the town; in return for all which he was to pay me a thousand guineas; and already beforehand, by way of acknowledgment for the public civilities of the town, he sent, through my hands, a contribution of three hundred guineas to the various local institutions for education of the poor, or for charity.

The Russian secretary had latterly corresponded with me from a little German town, not more than ninety miles distant; and, as he had special couriers at his service, the negotiations advanced so rapidly that all was closed before the end of September. And, when once that consummation was attained, I, that previously had breathed no syllable of what was stirring, now gave loose to the interesting tidings, and suffered them to spread through the whole

compass of the town. It will be easily imagined that such a story, already romantic enough in its first outline, would lose nothing in the telling. An Englishman to begin with, which name of itself, and at all times, is a passport into German favor, but much more since the late memorable wars that but for Englishmen would have drooped into disconnected efforts—next, an Englishman of rank and of the *haute noblesse*—then a soldier covered with brilliant distinctions, and in the most brilliant arm of the service; young, moreover, and yet a veteran by his experience—fresh from the most awful battle of this planet since the day of Pharsalia,—radiant with the favor of courts and of imperial ladies; finally (which alone would have given him an interest in all female hearts), an Antinous of faultless beauty, a Grecian statue, as it were, into which the breath of life had been breathed by some modern Pygmalion;—such a pomp of gifts and endowments settling upon one man's head, should not have required for its effect the vulgar consummation (and yet to many it *was* the consummation and crest of the whole) that he was reputed to be rich beyond the dreams of romance or the necessities of a fairy tale. Unparalleled was the impression made upon our stagnant society; every tongue was busy in discussing the marvelous young Englishman from morning to night; every female fancy was busy in depicting the personal appearance of this gay apparition.

On his arrival at my house, I became sensible of a truth which I had observed some years before. The commonplace maxim is, that it is dangerous to raise expectations too high. This, which is thus generally expressed, and without limitation, is true only conditionally; it is true then and there only where there is but little merit to sustain and justify the expectation. But in any case where the merit is transcendent of its kind, it is always useful to rack the expectation up to the highest point. In anything which partakes of the infinite, the most unlimited expectations will find ample room for gratification; while it is certain that ordinary observers, possessing little sensibility, unless

where they have been warned to expect, will often fail to see what exists in the most conspicuous splendor. In this instance it certainly did no harm to the subject of expectation that I had been warned to look for so much. The warning, at any rate, put me on the lookout for whatever eminence there might be of grandeur in his personal appearance; while, on the other hand, this existed in such excess, so far transcending anything I had ever met with in my experience, that no expectation which it is in words to raise could have been disappointed.

These thoughts traveled with the rapidity of light through my brain, as at one glance my eye took in the supremacy of beauty and power which seemed to have alighted from the clouds before me. Power, and the contemplation of power, in any absolute incarnation of grandeur or excess, necessarily have the instantaneous effect of quelling all perturbation. My composure was restored in a moment. I looked steadily at him. We both bowed. And, at the moment when he raised his head from that inclination, I caught the glance of his eye; an eye such as might have been looked for in a face of such noble lineaments—

> "Blending the nature of the star
> With that of summer skies;"

and, therefore, meant by nature for the residence and organ of serene and gentle emotions; but it surprised, and at the same time filled me more almost with consternation than with pity, to observe that in those eyes a light of sadness had settled more profound than seemed possible for youth, or almost commensurate to a human sorrow; a sadness that might have become a Jewish prophet, when laden with inspirations of woe.

Two months had now passed away since the arrival of Mr. Wyndham. He had been universally introduced to the superior society of the place; and, as I need hardly say, universally received with favor and distinction. In reality, his wealth and importance, his military honors, and the

dignity of his character, as expressed in his manners and deportment, were too eminent to allow of his being treated with less than the highest attention in any society whatever. But the effect of these various advantages, enforced and recommended as they were by a personal beauty so rare, was somewhat too potent for the comfort and self-possession of ordinary people; and really exceeded in a painful degree the standard of pretensions under which such people could feel themselves at their ease. He was not naturally of a reserved turn; far from it. His disposition had been open, frank, and confiding, originally; and his roving, adventurous life, of which considerably more than one half had been passed in camps, had communicated to his manners a more than military frankness. But the profound melancholy which possessed him, from whatever cause it arose, necessarily chilled the native freedom of his demeanor, unless when it was revived by strength of friendship or of love. The effect was awkward and embarrassing to all parties. Every voice paused or faltered when he entered a room—dead silence ensued—not an eye but was directed upon him, or else, sunk in timidity, settled upon the floor; and young ladies seriously lost the power, for a time, of doing more than murmuring a few confused, half-inarticulate syllables, or half-inarticulate sounds. The solemnity, in fact, of a first presentation, and the utter impossibility of soon recovering a free, unembarrassed movement of conversation, made such scenes really distressing to all who participated in them, either as actors or spectators. Certainly this result was not a pure effect of manly beauty, however heroic, and in whatever excess; it arose in part from the many and extraordinary endowments which had centered in his person, not less from fortune than from nature; in part also, as I have said, from the profound sadness and freezing gravity of Mr. Wyndham's manner; but still more from the perplexing mystery which surrounded that sadness.

Were there, then, no exceptions to this condition of awe-struck admiration? Yes; one at least there was in whose

bosom the spell of all-conquering passion soon thawed every trace of icy reserve. While the rest of the world retained a dim sentiment of awe toward Mr. Wyndham, Margaret Liebenheim only heard of such a feeling to wonder that it could exist toward *him*. Never was there so victorious a conquest interchanged between two youthful hearts—never before such a rapture of instantaneous sympathy. I did not witness the first meeting of this mysterious Maximilian and this magnificent Margaret, and do not know whether Margaret manifested that trepidation and embarrassment which distressed so many of her youthful co-rivals; but, if she did, it must have fled before the first glance of the young man's eye, which would interpret, past all misunderstanding, the homage of his soul and the surrender of his heart. Their third meeting I *did* see; and there all shadow of embarrassment had vanished, except, indeed, of that delicate embarrassment which clings to impassioned admiration. On the part of Margaret, it seemed as if a new world had dawned upon her that she had not so much as suspected among the capacities of human experience. Like some bird she seemed, with powers unexercised for soaring and flying, not understood even as yet, and that never until now had found an element of air capable of sustaining her wings, or tempting her to put forth her buoyant instincts. He, on the other hand, now first found the realization of his dreams, and for a mere possibility which he had long too deeply contemplated, fearing, however, that in his own case it might prove a chimera, or that he might never meet a woman answering the demands of his heart, he now found a corresponding reality that left nothing to seek.

Here, then, and thus far, nothing but happiness had resulted from the new arrangement. But, if this had been little anticipated by many, far less had I, for my part, anticipated the unhappy revolution which was wrought in the whole nature of Ferdinand von Harrelstein. He was the son of a German baron; a man of good family, but of small estate, who had been pretty nearly a soldier of for-

tune in the Prussian service, and had, late in life, won sufficient favor with the king and other military superiors, to have an early prospect of obtaining a commission, under flattering auspices, for this only son—a son endeared to him as the companion of unprosperous years, and as a dutifully affectionate child. Ferdinand had yet another hold upon his father's affections: his features preserved to the baron's unclouded remembrance a most faithful and living memorial of that angelic wife who had died in giving birth to this third child—the only one who had long survived her. Anxious that his son should go through a regular course of mathematical instruction, now becoming annually more important in all the artillery services throughout Europe, and that he should receive a tincture of other liberal studies which he had painfully missed in his own military career, the baron chose to keep his son for the last seven years at our college, until he was now entering upon his twenty-third year. For the four last he had lived with me as the sole pupil whom I had, or meant to have, had not the brilliant proposals of the young Russian guardsman persuaded me to break my resolution. Ferdinand von Harrelstein had good talents, not dazzling but respectable; and so amiable were his temper and manners that I had introduced him everywhere, and everywhere he was a favorite; and everywhere, indeed, except exactly there where only in this world he cared for favor. Margaret Liebenheim, she it was whom he loved, and had loved for years, with the whole ardor of his ardent soul; she it was for whom, or at whose command, he would willingly have died. Early he had felt that in her hands lay his destiny; that she it was who must be his good or his evil genius.

At first, and perhaps to the last, I pitied him exceedingly. But my pity soon ceased to be mingled with respect. Before the arrival of Mr. Wyndham he had shown himself generous, indeed magnanimous. But never was there so painful an overthrow of a noble nature as manifested itself in him. I believe that he had not himself suspected the strength of his passion; and the sole resource for him, as

I said often, was to quit the city—to engage in active pursuits of enterprise, of ambition, or of science. But he heard me as a somnambulist might have heard me—dreaming with his eyes open. Sometimes he had fits of reverie, starting, fearful, agitated; sometimes he broke out into maniacal movements of wrath, invoking some absent person, praying, beseeching, menacing some air-wove phantom; sometimes he slunk into solitary corners, muttering to himself, and with gestures sorrowfully significant, or with tones and fragments of expostulation that moved the most callous to compassion. Still he turned a deaf ear to the only practical counsel that had a chance for reaching his ears. Like a bird under the fascination of a rattlesnake, he would not summon up the energies of his nature to make an effort at flying away. "Begone, while it is time!" said others, as well as myself; for more than I saw enough to fear some fearful catastrophe. "Lead us not into temptation!" said his confessor to him in my hearing (for, though Prussians, the Von Harrelsteins were Roman Catholics), "lead us not into temptation!—that is our daily prayer to God. Then, my son, being led into temptation, do not you persist in courting, nay, almost tempting temptation. Try the effects of absence, though but for a month." The good father even made an overture toward imposing a penance upon him, that would have involved an absence of some duration. But he was obliged to desist; for he saw that, without effecting any good, he would merely add spiritual disobedience to the other offenses of the young man. Ferdinand himself drew his attention to *this;* for he said: "Reverend father! do not you, with the purpose of removing me from temptation, be yourself the instrument for tempting me into a rebellion against the church. Do not you weave snares about my steps; snares there are already, and but too many." The old man sighed, and desisted.

Then came—But enough! From pity, from sympathy, from counsel, and from consolation, and from scorn—from each of these alike the poor stricken deer "recoiled into

the wilderness;" he fled for days together into solitary parts of the forest; fled, as I still hoped and prayed, in good earnest and for a long farewell; but, alas! no: still he returned to the haunts of his ruined happiness and his buried hopes, at each return looking more like the wreck of his former self; and once I heard a penetrating monk observe, whose convent stood near the city gates: "There goes one ready equally for doing or suffering, and of whom we shall soon hear that he is involved in some great catastrophe—it may be of deep calamity—it may be of memorable guilt."

So stood matters among us. January was drawing to its close; the weather was growing more and more winterly; high winds, piercingly cold, were raving through our narrow streets; and still the spirit of social festivity bade defiance to the storms which sang through our ancient forests. From the accident of our magistracy being selected from the tradesmen of the city, the hospitalities of the place were far more extensive than would otherwise have happened; for every member of the corporation gave two annual entertainments in his official character. And such was the rivalship which prevailed, that often one quarter of the year's income was spent upon these galas. Nor was any ridicule thus incurred; for the costliness of the entertainment was understood to be an expression of *official* pride, done in honor of the city, not as an effort of personal display. It followed, from the spirit in which these half-yearly dances originated, that, being given on the part of the city, every stranger of rank was marked out as a privileged guest, and the hospitality of the community would have been equally affronted by failing to offer or by failing to accept the invitation.

Hence it had happened that the Russian guardsman had been introduced into many a family which otherwise could not have hoped for such a distinction. Upon the evening at which I am now arrived, the twenty-second of January, 1816, the whole city, in its wealthier classes, was assembled beneath the roof of a tradesman who had the heart of a

prince. In every point our entertainment was superb; and I remarked that the music was the finest I had heard for years. Our host was in joyous spirits; proud to survey the splendid company he had gathered under his roof; happy to witness their happiness; elated in their elation. Joyous was the dance—joyous were all faces that I saw —up to midnight, very soon after which time supper was announced; and that also, I think, was the most joyous of all the banquets I ever witnessed. The accomplished guardsman outshone himself in brilliancy; even his melancholy relaxed. In fact, how could it be otherwise? near to him sat Margaret Liebenheim—hanging upon his words —more lustrous and bewitching than ever I had beheld her. There she had been placed by the host; and everybody knew why. That is one of the luxuries attached to love; all men cede their places with pleasure; women make way. Even she herself knew, though not obliged to know, why she was seated in that neighborhood; and took her place, if with a rosy suffusion upon her cheeks, yet with fullness of happiness at her heart.

The guardsman pressed forward to claim Miss Liebenheim's hand for the next dance; a movement which she was quick to favor, by retreating behind one or two parties from a person who seemed coming toward her. The music again began to pour its voluptuous tides through the bounding pulses of the youthful company; again the flying feet of the dancers began to respond to the measures; again the mounting spirit of delight began to fill the sails of the hurrying night with steady inspiration. All went happily. Already had one dance finished; some were pacing up and down, leaning on the arms of their partners; some were reposing from their exertions; when—O heavens! what a shriek! what a gathering tumult!

Every eye was bent toward the doors—every eye strained forward to discover what was passing. But there, every moment, less and less could be seen, for the gathering crowd more and more intercepted the view;—so much the more was the ear at leisure for the shrieks redoubled upon

shrieks. Miss Liebenheim had moved downward to the crowd. From her superior height she overlooked all the ladies at the point where she stood. In the center stood a rustic girl, whose features had been familiar to her for some months. She had recently come into the city, and had lived with her uncle, a tradesman, not ten doors from Margaret's own residence, partly on the terms of a kinswoman, partly as a servant on trial. At this moment she was exhausted with excitement, and the nature of the shock she had sustained. Mere panic seemed to have mastered her; and she was leaning, unconscious and weeping, upon the shoulder of some gentleman, who was endeavoring to soothe her. A silence of horror seemed to possess the company, most of whom were still unacquainted with the cause of the alarming interruption. A few, however, who had heard her first agitated words, finding that they waited in vain for a fuller explanation, now rushed tumultuously out of the ballroom to satisfy themselves on the spot. The distance was not great; and within five minutes several persons returned hastily, and cried out to the crowd of ladies that all was true which the young girl had said. "What was true?" That her uncle Mr. Weishaupt's family had been murdered; that not one member of the family had been spared—namely, Mr. Weishaupt himself and his wife, neither of them much above sixty, but both infirm beyond their years; two maiden sisters of Mr. Weishaupt, from forty to forty-six years of age, and an elderly female domestic.

An incident happened during the recital of these horrors, and of the details which followed, that furnished matter for conversation even in these hours when so thrilling an interest had possession of all minds. Many ladies fainted; among them Miss Liebenheim—and she would have fallen to the ground but for Maximilian, who sprang forward and caught her in his arms. She was long of returning to herself; and, during the agony of his suspense, he stooped and kissed her pallid lips. That sight was more than could be borne by one who stood a little behind the

group. He rushed forward, with eyes glaring like a tiger's, and leveled a blow at Maximilian. It was poor, maniacal Von Harrelstein, who had been absent in the forest for a week. Many people stepped forward and checked his arm, uplifted for a repetition of this outrage. One or two had some influence with him, and led him away from the spot; while as to Maximilian, so absorbed was he that he had not so much as perceived the affront offered to himself. Margaret, on reviving, was confounded at finding herself so situated amid a great crowd; and yet the prudes complained that there was a look of love exchanged between herself and Maximilian, that ought not to have escaped her in such a situation. If they meant by such a situation, one so public, it must be also recollected that it was a situation of excessive agitation; but, if they alluded to the horrors of the moment, no situation more naturally opens the heart to affection and confiding love than the recoil from scenes of exquisite terror.

An examination went on that night before the magistrates, but all was dark; although suspicion attached to a negro named Aaron, who had occasionally been employed in menial services by the family, and had been in the house immediately before the murder. The circumstances were such as to leave every man in utter perplexity as to the presumption for and against him. His mode of defending himself, and his general deportment, were marked by the coolest, nay, the most sneering indifference. The first thing he did, on being acquainted with the suspicions against himself, was to laugh ferociously, and to all appearance most cordially and unaffectedly. He demanded whether a poor man like himself would have left so much wealth as lay scattered abroad in that house—gold repeaters, massy plate, gold snuff boxes—untouched? That argument certainly weighed much in his favor. And yet again it was turned against him; for a magistrate asked him how *he* happened to know already that nothing had been touched. True it was, and a fact which had puzzled no less than it had awed the magistrates, that, upon their examination of the

premises, many rich articles of *bijouterie*, jewelry, and personal ornaments, had been found lying underanged, and apparently in their usual situations; articles so portable that in the very hastiest flight some might have been carried off. In particular, there was a crucifix of gold, enriched with jewels so large and rare, that of itself it would have constituted a prize of great magnitude. Yet this was left untouched, though suspended in a little oratory that had been magnificently adorned by the elder of the maiden sisters. There was an altar, in itself a splendid object, furnished with every article of the most costly material and workmanship, for the private celebration of mass. This crucifix, as well as everything else in the little closet, must have been seen by one at least of the murderous party; for hither had one of the ladies fled; hither had one of the murderers pursued. She had clasped the golden pillars which supported the altar—had turned perhaps her dying looks upon the crucifix; for there, with one arm still wreathed about the altar foot, though in her agony she had turned round upon her face, did the elder sister lie when the magistrates first broke open the street door. And upon the beautiful *parquet*, or inlaid floor which ran round the room, were still impressed the footsteps of the murderer. These, it was hoped, might furnish a clew to the discovery of one at least among the murderous band. They were rather difficult to trace accurately; those parts of the traces which lay upon the black *tessellæ* being less distinct in the outline than the others upon the white or colored. Most unquestionably, so far as this went, it furnished a negative circumstance in favor of the negro, for the footsteps were very different in outline from his, and smaller, for Aaron was a man of colossal build. And as to his knowledge of the state in which the premises had been found, and his having so familiarly relied upon the fact of no robbery having taken place as an argument on his own behalf, he contended that he had himself been among the crowd that pushed into the house along with the magistrates; that, from his previous acquaintance with the rooms and their

ordinary condition, a glance of the eye had been sufficient for him to ascertain the undisturbed condition of all the valuable property most obvious to the grasp of a robber; that, in fact, he had seen enough for his argument before he and the rest of the mob had been ejected by the magistrates; but, finally, that independently of all this, he had heard both the officers, as they conducted him, and all the tumultuous gatherings of people in the street, arguing for the mysteriousness of the bloody transaction upon that very circumstance of so much gold, silver, and jewels, being left behind untouched.

In six weeks or less from the date of this terrific event, the negro was set at liberty by a majority of voices among the magistrates. In that short interval other events had occurred no less terrific and mysterious. In this first murder, though the motive was dark and unintelligible, yet the agency was not so; ordinary assassins apparently, and with ordinary means, had assailed a helpless and unprepared family; had separated them; attacked them singly in flight (for in this first case all but one of the murdered persons appeared to have been making for the street door); and in all this there was no subject for wonder, except the original one as to the motive. But now came a series of cases destined to fling this earliest murder into the shade. Nobody could now be unprepared; and yet the tragedies, henceforward, which passed before us, one by one, in sad, leisurely, or in terrific groups, seemed to argue a lethargy like that of apoplexy in the victims, one and all. The very midnight of mysterious awe fell upon all minds.

Three weeks had passed since the murder at Mr. Weishaupt's—three weeks the most agitated that had been known in this sequestered city. We felt ourselves solitary, and thrown upon our own resources; all combination with other towns being unavailing from their great distance. Our situation was no ordinary one. Had there been some mysterious robbers among us, the chances of a visit, divided among so many, would have been too small to distress the most timid; while to young and high-spirited people, with

courage to spare for ordinary trials, such a state of expectation would have sent pulses of pleasurable anxiety among the nerves. But murderers! exterminating murderers!—clothed in mystery and utter darkness—these were objects too terrific for any family to contemplate with fortitude. Had these very murderers added to their functions those of robbery, they would have become less terrific; nine out of every ten would have found themselves discharged, as it were, from the roll of those who were liable to a visit; while such as knew themselves liable would have had warning of their danger in the fact of being rich; and would, from the very riches which constituted that danger, have derived the means of repelling it. But, as things were, no man could guess what it was that must make him obnoxious to the murderers. Imagination exhausted itself in vain guesses at the causes which could by possibility have made the poor Weishaupts objects of such hatred to any man. True, they were bigoted in a degree which indicated feebleness of intellect; but *that* wounded no man in particular, while to many it recommended them. True, their charity was narrow and exclusive, but to those of their own religious body it expanded munificently; and, being rich beyond their wants, or any means of employing wealth which their gloomy asceticism allowed, they had the power of doing a great deal of good among the indigent papists of the suburbs. As to the old gentleman and his wife, their infirmities confined them to the house. Nobody remembered to have seen them abroad for years. How, therefore, or when could they have made an enemy? And, with respect to the maiden sisters of Mr. Weishaupt, they were simply weak-minded persons, now and then too censorious, but not placed in a situation to incur serious anger from any quarter, and too little heard of in society to occupy much of anybody's attention.

Conceive, then, that three weeks have passed away, that the poor Weishaupts have been laid in that narrow sanctuary which no murderer's voice will ever violate. Quiet has not returned to us, but the first flutterings of panic

have subsided. People are beginning to respire freely again; and such another space of time would have cicatrized our wounds—when, hark! a church bell rings out a loud alarm;—the night is starlight and frosty—the iron notes are heard clear, solemn, but agitated. What could this mean? I hurried to a room over the porter's lodge, and, opening the window, I cried out to a man passing hastily below, "What, in God's name, is the meaning of this?" It was a watchman belonging to our district. I knew his voice, he knew mine, and he replied in great agitation:

"It is another murder, sir, at the old town councilor's, Albernass; and this time they have made a clear house of it."

"God preserve us! Has a curse been pronounced upon this city? What can be done? What are the magistrates going to do?"

"I don't know, sir. I have orders to run to the Black Friars, where another meeting is gathering. Shall I say you will attend, sir?"

"Yes—no—stop a little. No matter, you may go on; I'll follow immediately."

I went instantly to Maximilian's room. He was lying asleep on a sofa, at which I was not surprised, for there had been a severe stag chase in the morning. Even at this moment I found myself arrested by two objects, and I paused to survey them. One was Maximilian himself. A person so mysterious took precedency of other interests even at a time like this; and especially by his features, which, composed in profound sleep, as sometimes happens, assumed a new expression, which arrested me chiefly by awaking some confused remembrance of the same features seen under other circumstances and in times long past; but where? This was what I could not recollect, though once before a thought of the same sort had crossed my mind. The other object of my interest was a miniature, which Maximilian was holding in his hand. He had gone to sleep apparently looking at this picture; and the hand which held it had slipped down upon the sofa, so that it

was in danger of falling. I released the miniature from his hand, and surveyed it attentively. It represented a lady of sunny, oriental complexion, and features the most noble that it is possible to conceive. One might have imagined such a lady, with her raven locks and imperial eyes, to be the favorite sultana of some Amurath or Mohammed. What was she to Maximilian, or what *had* she been? For, by the tear which I had once seen him drop upon this miniature when he believed himself unobserved, I conjectured that her dark tresses were already laid low, and her name among the list of vanished things. Probably she was his mother, for the dress was rich with pearls, and evidently that of a person in the highest rank of court beauties. I sighed as I thought of the stern melancholy of her son, if Maximilian were he, as connected, probably, with the fate and fortunes of this majestic beauty; somewhat haughty, perhaps, in the expression of her fine features, but still noble—generous—confiding. Laying the picture on the table, I awoke Maximilian, and told him of the dreadful news. He listened attentively, made no remark, but proposed that we should go together to the meeting of our quarter at the Black Friars. He colored upon observing the miniature on the table; and, therefore, I frankly told him in what situation I had found it, and that I had taken the liberty of admiring it for a few moments. He pressed it tenderly to his lips, sighed heavily, and we walked away together.

I pass over the frenzied state of feeling in which we found the meeting. Fear, or rather horror, did not promote harmony; many quarreled with each other in discussing the suggestions brought forward, and Maximilian was the only person attended to. He proposed a nightly mounted patrol for every district. And in particular he offered, as being himself a member of the university, that the students should form themselves into a guard, and go out by rotation to keep watch and ward from sunset to sunrise. Arrangements were made toward that object by the few people who retained possession of their senses, and for the present we separated.

Never, in fact, did any events so keenly try the difference between man and man. Some started up into heroes under the excitement. Some, alas for the dignity of man! drooped into helpless imbecility. Women, in some cases, rose superior to men, but yet not so often as might have happened under a less mysterious danger. A woman is not unwomanly because she confronts danger boldly. But I have remarked, with respect to female courage, that it requires, more than that of men, to be sustained by hope; and that it droops more certainly in the presence of a *mysterious* danger. The fancy of women is more active, if not stronger, and it influences more directly the physical nature. In this case few were the women who made even a show of defying the danger. On the contrary, with *them* fear took the form of sadness, while with many of the men it took that of wrath.

And how did the Russian guardsman conduct himself amidst this panic? Many were surprised at his behavior; some complained of it; I did neither. He took a reasonable interest in each separate case, listened to the details with attention, and, in the examination of persons able to furnish evidence, never failed to suggest judicious questions. But still he manifested a coolness almost amounting to carelessness, which to many appeared revolting. But these people I desired to notice that all the other military students, who had been long in the army, felt exactly in the same way. In fact, the military service of Christendom, for the last ten years, had been anything but a parade service; and to those, therefore, who were familiar with every form of horrid butchery, the mere outside horrors of death had lost much of their terror. In the recent murder there had not been much to call forth sympathy. The family consisted of two old bachelors, two sisters, and one grandniece. The niece was absent on a visit, and the two old men were cynical misers, to whom little personal interest attached. Still, in this case as in that of the Weishaupts, the same twofold mystery confounded the public mind—the mystery of the *how*, and the profounder mystery of the *why*. Here, again, no atom of property was taken, though both the misers had

hordes of ducats and English guineas in the very room where they died. Their bias, again, though of an unpopular character, had rather availed to make them unknown than to make them hateful. In one point this case differed memorably from the other—that, instead of falling helpless, or flying victims (as the Weishaupts had done), these old men, strong, resolute, and not so much taken by surprise, left proofs that they had made a desperate defense. The furniture was partly smashed to pieces, and the other details furnished evidence still more revolting of the *acharnement* with which the struggle had been maintained. In fact, with *them* a surprise must have been impracticable, as they admitted nobody into their house on visiting terms. It was thought singular that from each of these domestic tragedies a benefit of the same sort should result to young persons standing in nearly the same relation. The girl who gave the alarm at the ball, with two little sisters, and a little orphan nephew, their cousin, divided the very large inheritance of the Weishaupts; and in this latter case the accumulated savings of two long lives all vested in the person of the amiable grandniece.

But now, as if in mockery of all our anxious consultations and elaborate devices, three fresh murders took place on the two consecutive nights succeeding these new arrangements. And in one case, as nearly as time could be noted, the mounted patrol must have been within call at the very moment when the awful work was going on. I shall not dwell much upon them; but a few circumstances are too interesting to be passed over. The earliest case on the first of the two nights was that of a currier. He was fifty years old; not rich, but well off. His first wife was dead, and his daughters by her were married away from their father's house. He had married a second wife, but, having no children by her, and keeping no servants, it is probable that, but for an accident, no third person would have been in the house at the time when the murderers got admittance. About seven o'clock, a wayfaring man, a journeyman currier, who, according to our German system, was now in his *wander-*

jahre, entered the city from the forest. At the gate he made some inquiries about the curriers and tanners of our town; and, agreeably to the information he received, made his way to this Mr. Heinberg. Mr. Heinberg refused to admit him, until he mentioned his errand, and pushed below the door a letter of recommendation from a Silesian correspondent, describing him as an excellent and steady workman. Wanting such a man, and satisfied by the answers returned that he was what he represented himself, Mr. Heinberg unbolted his door and admitted him. Then, after slipping the bolt into its place, he bade him sit to the fire, brought him a glass of beer, conversed with him for ten minutes, and said: "You had better stay here to-night; I'll tell you why afterwards; but now I'll step upstairs, and ask my wife whether she can make up a bed for you; and do you mind the door while I'm away." So saying, he went out of the room. Not one minute had he been gone when there came a gentle knock at the door. It was raining heavily, and, being a stranger to the city, not dreaming that in any crowded town such a state of things could exist as really did in this, the young man, without hesitation, admitted the person knocking. He has declared since—but, perhaps, confounding the feelings gained from better knowledge with the feelings of the moment—that from the moment he drew the bolt he had a misgiving that he had done wrong. A man entered in a horseman's cloak, and so muffled up that the journeyman could discover none of his features. In a low tone the stranger said, "Where's Heinberg?"—"Upstairs."—"Call him down, then." The journeyman went to the door by which Mr. Heinberg had left him, and called, "Mr. Heinberg, here's one wanting you!" Mr. Heinberg heard him, for the man could distinctly catch these words: "God bless me! has the man opened the door? O, the traitor! I see it." Upon this he felt more and more consternation, though not knowing why. Just then he heard a sound of feet behind him. On turning round, he beheld three more men in the room; one was fastening the outer door; one was drawing some arms from a cupboard, and two others were whis-

pering together. He himself was disturbed and perplexed, and felt that all was not right. Such was his confusion, that either all the men's faces must have been muffled up, or at least he remembered nothing distinctly but one fierce pair of eyes glaring upon him. Then, before he could look round, came a man from behind and threw a sack over his head, which was drawn tight about his waist, so as to confine his arms, as well as to impede his hearing in part, and his voice altogether. He was then pushed into a room; but previously he had heard a rush upstairs, and words like those of a person exulting, and then a door closed. Once it opened, and he could distinguish the words, in one voice, "And for *that!*" to which another voice replied, in tones that made his heart quake, "Aye, for *that*, sir." And then the same voice went on rapidly to say, "O dog! could you hope"— at which word the door closed again. Once he thought that he heard a scuffle, and he was sure that he heard the sound of feet, as if rushing from one corner of a room to another. But then all was hushed and still for about six or seven minutes, until a voice close to his ear said, "Now, wait quietly till some persons come in to release you. This will happen within half an hour." Accordingly, in less than that time, he again heard the sound of feet within the house, his own bandages were liberated, and he was brought to tell his story at the police office. Mr. Heinberg was found in his bedroom. He had died by strangulation, and the cord was still tightened about his neck. During the whole dreadful scene his youthful wife had been locked into a closet, where she heard or saw nothing.

In the second case, the object of vengeance was again an elderly man. Of the ordinary family, all were absent at a country house, except the master and a female servant. She was a woman of courage, and blessed with the firmest nerves; so that she might have been relied on for reporting accurately everything seen or heard. But things took another course. The first warning that she had of the murderers' presence was from their steps and voices already in the hall. She heard her master run hastily into the hall,

crying out, "Lord Jesus!—Mary, Mary, save me!" The servant resolved to give what aid she could, seized a large poker, and was hurrying to his assistance, when she found that they had nailed up the door of communication at the head of the stairs. What passed after this she could not tell; for, when the impulse of intrepid fidelity had been balked, and she found that her own safety was provided for by means which made it impossible to aid a poor fellow creature who had just invoked her name, the generous-hearted creature was overcome by anguish of mind, and sank down on the stair, where she lay, unconscious of all that succeeded, until she found herself raised in the arms of a mob who had entered the house. And how came they to have entered? In a way characteristically dreadful. The night was starlit; the patrols had perambulated the street without noticing anything suspicious, when two foot passengers, who were following in their rear, observed a dark-colored stream traversing the causeway. One of them, at the same instant tracing the stream backward with his eyes, observed that it flowed from under the door of Mr. Munzer, and, dipping his finger in the trickling fluid, he held it up to the lamplight, yelling out at the moment, "Why, this is blood!" It was so, indeed, and it was yet warm. The other saw, heard, and like an arrow flew after the horse patrol, then in the act of turning the corner. One cry, full of meaning, was sufficient for ears full of expectation. The horsemen pulled up, wheeled, and in another moment reined up at Mr. Munzer's door. The crowd, gathering like the drifting of snow, supplied implements which soon forced the chains of the door and all other obstacles. But the murderous party had escaped, and all traces of their persons had vanished, as usual.

Rarely did any case occur without some peculiarity more or less interesting. In that which happened on the following night, making the fifth in the series, an impressive incident varied the monotony of horrors. In this case the parties aimed at were two elderly ladies, who conducted a female boarding school. None of the pupils had as yet re-

turned to school from their vacation; but two sisters, young girls of thirteen and sixteen, coming from a distance, had stayed at school throughout the Christmas holidays. It was the youngest of these who gave the only evidence of any value, and one which added a new feature of alarm to the existing panic. Thus it was that her testimony was given: On the day before the murder, she and her sister were sitting with the old ladies in a room fronting to the street; the elder ladies were reading, the younger ones drawing. Louisa, the youngest, never had her ear inattentive to the slightest sound, and once it struck her that she heard the creaking of a foot upon the stairs. She said nothing, but, slipping out of the room, she ascertained that the two female servants were in the kitchen, and could not have been absent; that all the doors and windows, by which ingress was possible, were not only locked, but bolted and barred—a fact which excluded all possibility of invasion by means of false keys. Still she felt persuaded that she had heard the sound of a heavy foot upon the stairs. It was, however, daylight, and this gave her confidence; so that, without communicating her alarm to anybody, she found courage to traverse the house in every direction; and, as nothing was either seen or heard, she concluded that her ears had been too sensitively awake. Yet that night, as she lay in bed, dim terrors assailed her, especially because she considered that, in so large a house, some closet or other might have been overlooked, and, in particular, she did not remember to have examined one or two chests, in which a man could have lain concealed. Through the greater part of the night she lay awake; but as one of the town clocks struck four, she dismissed her anxieties, and fell asleep. The next day, wearied with this unusual watching, she proposed to her sister that they should go to bed earlier than usual. This they did; and, on their way upstairs, Louisa happened to think suddenly of a heavy cloak, which would improve the coverings of her bed against the severity of the night. The cloak was hanging up in a closet within a closet, both leading off from a large room used as the young ladies' dancing school. These closets she

had examined on the previous day, and therefore she felt no particular alarm at this moment. The cloak was the first article which met her sight; it was suspended from a hook in the wall, and close to the door. She took it down, but, in doing so, exposed part of the wall and of the floor, which its folds had previously concealed. Turning away hastily, the chances were that she had gone without making any discovery. In the act of turning, however, her light fell brightly on a man's foot and leg. Matchless was her presence of mind; having previously been humming an air, she continued to do so. But now came the trial; her sister was bending her steps to the same closet. If she suffered her to do so, Lottchen would stumble on the same discovery, and expire of fright. On the other hand, if she gave her a hint, Lottchen would either fail to understand her, or, gaining but a glimpse of her meaning, would shriek aloud, or by some equally decisive expression convey the fatal news to the assassin that he had been discovered. In this torturing dilemma fear prompted an expedient, which to Lottchen appeared madness, and to Louisa herself the act of a sibyl instinct with blind inspiration. "Here," said she, "is our dancing room. When shall we all meet and dance again together?" Saying which, she commenced a wild dance, whirling her candle round her head until the motion extinguished it; then, eddying round her sister in narrowing circles, she seized Lottchen's candle also, blew it out, and then interrupted her own singing to attempt a laugh. But the laugh was hysterical. The darkness, however, favored her; and, seizing her sister's arm, she forced her along, whispering, "Come, come, come!" Lottchen could not be so dull as entirely to misunderstand her. She suffered herself to be led up the first flight of stairs, at the head of which was a room looking into the street. In this they would have gained an asylum, for the door had a strong bolt. But, as they were on the last steps of the landing, they could hear the hard breathing and long strides of the murderer ascending behind them. He had watched them through a crevice, and had been satisfied by the hysterical laugh of Louisa that she

had seen him. In the darkness he could not follow fast, from ignorance of the localities, until he found himself upon the stairs. Louisa, dragging her sister along, felt strong as with the strength of lunacy, but Lottchen hung like a weight of lead upon her. She rushed into the room, but at the very entrance Lottchen fell. At that moment the assassin exchanged his stealthy pace for a loud clattering ascent. Already he was on the topmost stair; already he was throwing himself at a bound against the door, when Louisa, having dragged her sister into the room, closed the door and sent the bolt home in the very instant that the murderer's hand came into contact with the handle. Then, from the violence of her emotions, she fell down in a fit, with her arm around the sister whom she had saved.

How long they lay in this state neither ever knew. The two old ladies had rushed upstairs on hearing the tumult. Other persons had been concealed in other parts of the house. The servants found themselves suddenly locked in, and were not sorry to be saved from a collision which involved so awful a danger. The old ladies had rushed, side by side, into the very center of those who were seeking them. Retreat was impossible; two persons at least were heard following them upstairs. Something like a shrieking expostulation and counter-expostulation went on between the ladies and the murderers; then came louder voices—then one heart-piercing shriek, and then another—and then a slow moaning and a dead silence. Shortly afterwards was heard the first crashing of the door inward by the mob; but the murderers had fled upon the first alarm, and, to the astonishment of the servants, had fled upward. Examination, however, explained this: from a window in the roof they had passed to an adjoining house recently left empty; and here, as in other cases, we had proof how apt people are, in the midst of elaborate provisions against remote dangers, to neglect those which are obvious.

The reign of terror, it may be supposed, had now reached its *acmé*. The two old ladies were both lying dead at different points on the staircase, and, as usual, no conjecture could

be made as to the nature of the offense which they had given; but that the murder *was* a vindictive one, the usual evidence remained behind, in the proofs that no robbery had been attempted. Two new features, however, were now brought forward in this system of horrors, one of which riveted the sense of their insecurity to all families occupying extensive houses, and the other raised ill blood between the city and the university, such as required years to allay. The first arose out of the experience, now first obtained, that these assassins pursued the plan of secreting themselves within the house where they meditated a murder. All the care, therefore, previously directed to the securing of doors and windows after nightfall appeared nugatory. The other feature brought to light on this occasion was vouched for by one of the servants, who declared that, the moment before the door of the kitchen was fastened upon herself and fellow servant, she saw two men in the hall, one on the point of ascending the stairs, the other making toward the kitchen; that she could not distinguish the faces of either, but that both were dressed in the academic costume belonging to the students of the university. The consequences of such a declaration need scarcely be mentioned. Suspicion settled upon the students, who were more numerous since the general peace, in a much larger proportion military, and less select or respectable than heretofore. Still, no part of the mystery was cleared up by this discovery. Many of the students were poor enough to feel the temptation that might be offered by any *lucrative* system of outrage. Jealous and painful collusions were, in the meantime, produced; and, during the latter two months of this winter, it may be said that our city exhibited the very anarchy of evil passions. This condition of things lasted until the dawning of another spring.

It will be supposed that communications were made to the supreme government of the land as soon as the murders in our city were understood to be no casual occurrences, but links in a systematic series. Perhaps it might happen from some other business, of a higher kind, just then engaging

the attention of our governors, that our representations did not make the impression we had expected. We could not, indeed, complain of absolute neglect from the government. They sent down one or two of their most accomplished police officers, and they suggested some counsels, especially that we should examine more strictly into the quality of the miscellaneous population who occupied our large suburb. But they more than hinted that no necessity was seen either for quartering troops upon us, or for arming our local magistracy with ampler powers.

This correspondence with the central government occupied the month of March, and, before that time, the bloody system had ceased as abruptly as it began. The new police officer flattered himself that the terror of his name had wrought this effect; but judicious people thought otherwise. All, however, was quiet until the depth of summer, when, by way of hinting to us, perhaps, that the dreadful power which clothed itself with darkness had not expired, but was only reposing from its labors, all at once the chief jailer of the city was missing. He had been in the habit of taking long rides in the forest, his present situation being much of a sinecure. It was on the first of July that he was missed. In riding through the city gates that morning, he had mentioned the direction which he meant to pursue; and the last time he was seen alive was in one of the forest avenues, about eight miles from the city, leading toward the point he had indicated. This jailer was not a man to be regretted on his own account; his life had been a tissue of cruelty and brutal abuse of his powers, in which he had been too much supported by the magistrates, partly on the plea that it was their duty to back their own officers against all complainers, partly also from the necessities created by the turbulent times for a more summary exercise of their magisterial authority. No man, therefore, on his own separate account, could more willingly have been spared than this brutal jailer; and it was a general remark that, had the murderous band within our walls swept away this man only, they would have merited the public gratitude as purifiers from a public nui-

sance. But was it certain that the jailer had died by the same hands as had so deeply afflicted the peace of our city during the winter—or, indeed, that he had been murdered at all? The forest was too extensive to be searched; and it was possible that he might have met with some fatal accident. His horse had returned to the city gates in the night, and was found there in the morning. Nobody, however, for months could give information about his rider; and it seemed probable that he would not be discovered until the autumn and the winter should again carry the sportsman into every thicket and dingle of this sylvan tract. One person only seemed to have more knowledge on this subject than others, and that was poor Ferdinand von Harrelstein. He was now a mere ruin of what he had once been, both as to intellect and moral feeling; and I observed him frequently smile when the jailer was mentioned. "Wait," he would say, "till the leaves begin to drop; then you will see what fine fruit our forest bears." I did not repeat these expressions to anybody except one friend, who agreed with me that the jailer had probably been hanged in some recess of the forest, which summer veiled with its luxuriant umbrage; and that Ferdinand, constantly wandering in the forest, had discovered the body; but we both acquitted him of having been an accomplice in the murder.

Meantime the marriage between Margaret Liebenheim and Maximilian was understood to be drawing near. Yet one thing struck everybody with astonishment. As far as the young people were concerned, nobody could doubt that all was arranged; for never was happiness more perfect than that which seemed to unite them. Margaret was the impersonation of May-time and youthful rapture; even Maximilian in her presence seemed to forget his gloom, and the worm which gnawed at his heart was charmed asleep by the music of her voice, and the paradise of her smiles. But, until the autumn came, Margaret's grandfather had never ceased to frown upon this connection, and to support the pretensions of Ferdinand. The dislike, indeed, seemed reciprocal between him and Maximilian. Each avoided the oth-

er's company; and as to the old man, he went so far as to speak sneeringly of Maximilian. Maximilian despised him too heartily to speak of him at all. When he could not avoid meeting him, he treated him with a stern courtesy, which distressed Margaret as often as she witnessed it. She felt that her grandfather had been the aggressor; and she felt also that he did injustice to the merits of her lover. But she had a filial tenderness for the old man, as the father of her sainted mother, and on his own account, continually making more claims on her pity, as the decay of his memory, and a childish fretfulness growing upon him from day to day, marked his increasing imbecility.

Equally mysterious it seemed, that about this time Miss Liebenheim began to receive anonymous letters, written in the darkest and most menacing terms. Some of them she showed to me. I could not guess at their drift. Evidently they glanced at Maximilian, and bade her beware of connection with him; and dreadful things were insinuated about him. Could these letters be written by Ferdinand? Written they were not, but could they be dictated by him? Much I feared that they were; and the more so for one reason.

All at once, and most inexplicably, Margaret's grandfather showed a total change of opinion in his views as to her marriage. Instead of favoring Harrelstein's pretensions, as he had hitherto done, he now threw the feeble weight of his encouragement into Maximilian's scale; though, from the situation of all the parties, nobody attached any *practical* importance to the change in Mr. Liebenheim's way of thinking. Nobody? Is that true? No; one person *did* attach the greatest weight to the change—poor, ruined Ferdinand. He, so long as there was one person to take his part, so long as the grandfather of Margaret showed countenance to himself, had still felt his situation not utterly desperate.

Thus were things situated, when in November, all the leaves daily blowing off from the woods, and leaving bare the most secret haunts of the thickets, the body of the

jailer was left exposed in the forest; but not, as I and my friend had conjectured, hanged. No; he had died apparently by a more horrid death—by that of crucifixion. The tree, a remarkable one, bore upon a part of its trunk this brief but savage inscription:—"T. H., jailer at ——; *Crucified July* 1, 1816."

A great deal of talk went on throughout the city upon this discovery; nobody uttered one word of regret on account of the wretched jailer; on the contrary, the voice of vengeance, rising up in many a cottage, reached my ears in every direction as I walked abroad. The hatred in itself seemed horrid and unchristian, and still more so after the man's death; but, though horrid and fiendish for itself, it was much more impressive, considered as the measure and exponent of the damnable oppression which must have existed to produce it.

At first, when the absence of the jailer was a recent occurrence, and the presence of the murderers among us was, in consequence, revived to our anxious thoughts, it was an event which few alluded to without fear. But matters were changed now; the jailer had been dead for months, and this interval, during which the murderer's hand had slept, encouraged everybody to hope that the storm had passed over our city; that peace had returned to our hearths; and that henceforth weakness might sleep in safety, and innocence without anxiety. Once more we had peace within our walls, and tranquillity by our firesides. Again the child went to bed in cheerfulness, and the old man said his prayers in serenity. Confidence was restored; peace was reëstablished; and once again the sanctity of human life became the rule and the principle for all human hands among us. Great was the joy; the happiness was universal.

O heavens! by what a thunderbolt were we awakened from our security! On the night of the twenty-seventh of December, half an hour, it might be, after twelve o'clock, an alarm was given that all was not right in the house of Mr. Liebenheim. Vast was the crowd which soon collected in breathless agitation. In two minutes a man who

had gone round by the back of the house was heard unbarring Mr. Liebenheim's door: he was incapable of uttering a word; but his gestures, as he threw the door open and beckoned to the crowd, were quite enough. In the hall, at the further extremity, and as if arrested in the act of making for the back door, lay the bodies of old Mr. Liebenheim and one of his sisters, an aged widow; on the stair lay another sister, younger and unmarried, but upward of sixty. The hall and lower flight of stairs were floating with blood. Where, then, was Miss Liebenheim, the granddaughter? That was the universal cry; for she was beloved as generally as she was admired. Had the infernal murderers been devilish enough to break into that temple of innocent and happy life? Everyone asked the question, and everyone held his breath to listen; but for a few moments no one dared to advance; for the silence of the house was ominous. At length some one cried out that Miss Liebenheim had that day gone upon a visit to a friend, whose house was forty miles distant in the forest. "Aye," replied another, "she had settled to go; but I heard that something had stopped her." The suspense was now at its height, and the crowd passed from room to room, but found no traces of Miss Liebenheim. At length they ascended the stair, and in the very first room, a small closet, or *boudoir*, lay Margaret, with her dress soiled hideously with blood. The first impression was that she also had been murdered; but, on a nearer approach, she appeared to be unwounded, and was manifestly alive. Life had not departed, for her breath sent a haze over a mirror, but it was suspended, and she was laboring in some kind of fit. The first act of the crowd was to carry her into the house of a friend on the opposite side of the street, by which time medical assistance had crowded to the spot. Their attentions to Miss Liebenheim had naturally deranged the condition of things in the little room, but not before many people found time to remark that one of the murderers must have carried her with his bloody hands to the sofa on which she lay, for water had been sprinkled profusely over her

face and throat, and water was even placed ready to her hand, when she might happen to recover, upon a low footstool by the side of the sofa.

On the following morning, Maximilian, who had been upon a hunting party in the forest, returned to the city, and immediately learned the news. I did not see him for some hours after, but he then appeared to me thoroughly agitated, for the first time I had known him to be so. In the evening another perplexing piece of intelligence transpired with regard to Miss Liebenheim, which at first afflicted every friend of that young lady. It was that she had been seized with the pains of childbirth, and delivered of a son, who, however, being born prematurely, did not live many hours. Scandal, however, was not allowed long to batten upon this imaginary triumph, for within two hours after the circulation of this first rumor, followed a second, authenticated, announcing that Maximilian had appeared with the confessor of the Liebenheim family, at the residence of the chief magistrate, and there produced satisfactory proofs of his marriage with Miss Liebenheim, which had been duly celebrated, though with great secrecy, nearly eight months before. In our city, as in all the cities of our country, clandestine marriages, witnessed, perhaps, by two friends only of the parties, besides the officiating priest, are exceedingly common. In the mere fact, therefore, taken separately, there was nothing to surprise us, but, taken in connection with the general position of the parties, it *did* surprise us all; nor could we conjecture the reason for a step apparently so needless. For, that Maximilian could have thought it any point of prudence or necessity to secure the hand of Margaret Liebenheim by a private marriage, against the final opposition of her grandfather, nobody who knew the parties, who knew the perfect love which possessed Miss Liebenheim, the growing imbecility of her grandfather, or the utter contempt with which Maximilian regarded him, could for a moment believe. Altogether, the matter was one of profound mystery.

Meantime, it rejoiced me that poor Margaret's name had

been thus rescued from the fangs of the scandalmongers. These harpies had their prey torn from them at the very moment when they were sitting down to the unhallowed banquet. For this I rejoiced, but else there was little subject for rejoicing in anything which concerned poor Margaret. Long she lay in deep insensibility, taking no notice of anything, rarely opening her eyes, and apparently unconscious of the revolutions, as they succeeded, of morning or evening, light or darkness, yesterday or to-day. Great was the agitation which convulsed the heart of Maximilian during this period; he walked up and down in the cathedral nearly all day long, and the ravages which anxiety was working in his physical system might be read in his face. People felt it an intrusion upon the sanctity of his grief to look at him too narrowly, and the whole town sympathized with his situation.

At length a change took place in Margaret, but one which the medical men announced to Maximilian as boding ill for her recovery. The wanderings of her mind did not depart, but they altered their character. She became more agitated; she would start up suddenly, and strain her eyesight after some figure which she seemed to see; then she would apostrophize some person in the most piteous terms, beseeching him, with streaming eyes, to spare her old grandfather. "Look, look," she would cry out, "look at his gray hairs! O, sir! he is but a child; he does not know what he says; and he will soon be out of the way and in his grave; and very soon, sir, he will give you no more trouble." Then, again, she would mutter indistinctly for hours together; sometimes she would cry out frantically, and say things which terrified the bystanders, and which the physicians would solemnly caution them how they repeated; then she would weep, and invoke Maximilian to come and aid her. But seldom, indeed, did that name pass her lips that she did not again begin to strain her eyeballs, and start up in bed to watch some phantom of her poor, fevered heart, as if it seemed vanishing into some mighty distance.

After nearly seven weeks passed in this agitating state, suddenly, on one morning, the earliest and the loveliest of dawning spring, a change was announced to us all as having taken place in Margaret; but it was a change, alas! that ushered in the last great change of all. The conflict, which had for so long a period raged within her, and overthrown her reason, was at an end; the strife was over, and nature was settling into an everlasting rest. In the course of the night she had recovered her senses. When the morning light penetrated through her curtain, she recognized her attendants, made inquiries as to the month and the day of the month, and then, sensible that she could not outlive the day, she requested that her confessor might be summoned.

About an hour and a half the confessor remained alone with her. At the end of that time he came out, and hastily summoned the attendants, for Margaret, he said, was sinking into a fainting fit. The confessor himself might have passed through many a fit, so much was he changed by the results of this interview. I crossed him coming out of the house. I spoke to him—I called to him; but he heard me not—he saw me not. He saw nobody. Onward he strode to the cathedral, where Maximilian was sure to be found, pacing about upon the graves. Him he seized by the arm, whispered something into his ear, and then both retired into one of the many sequestered chapels in which lights are continually burning. There they had some conversation, but not very long, for within five minutes Maximilian strode away to the house in which his young wife was dying. One step seemed to carry him upstairs. The attendants, according to the directions they had received from the physicians, mustered at the head of the stairs to oppose him. But that was idle: before the rights which he held as a lover and a husband—before the still more sacred rights of grief, which he carried in his countenance, all opposition fled like a dream. There was, besides, a fury in his eye. A motion of his hand waved them off like summer flies; he entered the room, and once again, for the last time, he was in company with his beloved.

What passed who could pretend to guess? Something more than two hours had elapsed, during which Margaret had been able to talk occasionally, which was known, because at times the attendants heard the sound of Maximilian's voice evidently in tones of reply to something which she had said. At the end of that time, a little bell, placed near the bedside, was rung hastily. A fainting fit had seized Margaret; but she recovered almost before her women applied the usual remedies. They lingered, however, a little, looking at the youthful couple with an interest which no restraints availed to check. Their hands were locked together, and in Margaret's eyes there gleamed a farewell light of love, which settled upon Maximilian, and seemed to indicate that she was becoming speechless. Just at this moment she made a feeble effort to draw Maximilian toward her; he bent forward and kissed her with an anguish that made the most callous weep, and then he whispered something into her ear, upon which the attendants retired, taking this as a proof that their presence was a hindrance to a free communication. But they heard no more talking, and in less than ten minutes they returned. Maximilian and Margaret still retained their former position. Their hands were fast locked together; the same parting ray of affection, the same farewell light of love, was in the eye of Margaret, and still it settled upon Maximilian. But her eyes were beginning to grow dim; mists were rapidly stealing over them. Maximilian, who sat stupefied and like one not in his right mind, now, at the gentle request of the women, resigned his seat, for the hand which had clasped his had already relaxed its hold; the farewell gleam of love had departed. One of the women closed her eyelids; and there fell asleep forever the loveliest flower that our city had reared for generations.

The funeral took place on the fourth day after her death. In the morning of that day, from strong affection—having known her from an infant—I begged permission to see the corpse. She was in her coffin; snowdrops and crocuses were laid upon her innocent bosom, and roses, of that sort

which the season allowed, over her person. These and other lovely symbols of youth, of springtime, and of resurrection, caught my eye for the first moment; but in the next it fell upon her face. Mighty God! what a change! what a transfiguration! Still, indeed, there was the same innocent sweetness; still there was something of the same loveliness; the expression still remained; but for the features—all trace of flesh seemed to have vanished; mere outline of bony structure remained; mere pencilings and shadowings of what she once had been. This is, indeed, I exclaimed, "dust to dust—ashes to ashes!"

Maximilian, to the astonishment of everybody, attended the funeral. It was celebrated in the cathedral. All made way for him, and at times he seemed collected; at times he reeled like one who was drunk. He heard as one who hears not; he saw as one in a dream. The whole ceremony went on by torchlight, and toward the close he stood like a pillar, motionless, torpid, frozen. But the great burst of the choir, and the mighty blare ascending from our vast organ at the closing of the grave, recalled him to himself, and he strode rapidly homeward. Half an hour after I returned, I was summoned to his bedroom. He was in bed, calm and collected. What he said to me I remember as if it had been yesterday, and the very tone with which he said it, although more than twenty years have passed since then. He began thus: "I have not long to live"; and when he saw me start, suddenly awakened into a consciousness that perhaps he had taken poison, and meant to intimate as much, he continued: "You fancy I have taken poison;—no matter whether I have or not; if I have, the poison is such that no antidote will now avail; or, if they would, you well know that some griefs are of a kind which leave no opening to any hope. What difference, therefore, can it make whether I leave this earth to-day, to-morrow, or the next day? Be assured of this—that whatever I have determined to do is past all power of being affected by a human opposition. Occupy yourself not with any fruitless attempts, but calmly listen to me, else I know what to do." Seeing a sup-

pressed fury in his eye, notwithstanding I saw also some change stealing over his features as if from some subtle poison beginning to work upon his frame, awestruck I consented to listen, and sat still. "It is well that you do so, for my time is short. Here is my will, legally drawn up, and you will see that I have committed an immense property to your discretion. Here, again, is a paper still more important in my eyes; it is also testamentary, and binds you to duties which may not be so easy to execute as the disposal of my property. But now listen to something else, which concerns neither of these papers. Promise me, in the first place, solemnly, that whenever I die you will see me buried in the same grave as my wife, from whose funeral we are just returned. Promise."—I promised.—"Swear."—I swore.—"Finally, promise me that, when you read this second paper which I have put into your hands, whatsoever you may think of it, you will say nothing—publish nothing to the world until three years shall have passed."—I promised.—"And now farewell for three hours. Come to me again about ten o'clock, and take a glass of wine in memory of old times." This he said laughingly; but even then a dark spasm crossed his face. Yet, thinking that this might be the mere working of mental anguish within him, I complied with his desire, and retired. Feeling, however, but little at ease, I devised an excuse for looking in upon him about one hour and a half after I had left him. I knocked gently at his door; there was no answer. I knocked louder; still no answer. I went in. The light of day was gone, and I could see nothing. But I was alarmed by the utter stillness of the room. I listened earnestly, but not a breath could be heard. I rushed back hastily into the hall for a lamp; I returned; I looked in upon this marvel of manly beauty, and the first glance informed me that he and all his splendid endowments had departed forever. He had died, probably, soon after I left him, and had dismissed me from some growing instinct which informed him that his last agonies were at hand.

I took up his two testamentary documents; both were

addressed in the shape of letters to myself. The first was a rapid though distinct appropriation of his enormous property. General rules were laid down, upon which the property was to be distributed, but the details were left to my discretion, and to the guidance of circumstances as they should happen to emerge from the various inquiries which it would become necessary to set on foot. This first document I soon laid aside, both because I found that its provisions were dependent for their meaning upon the second, and because to this second document I looked with confidence for a solution of many mysteries;—of the profound sadness which had, from the first of my acquaintance with him, possessed a man so gorgeously endowed as the favorite of nature and fortune; of his motives for huddling up, in a clandestine manner, that connection which formed the glory of his life; and possibly (but then I hesitated) of the late unintelligible murders, which still lay under as profound a cloud as ever. Much of this *would* be unveiled—all might be: and there and then, with the corpse lying beside me of the gifted and mysterious writer, I seated myself, and read the following statement:

"March 26, 1817.

"My trial is finished; my conscience, my duty, my honor, are liberated; my 'warfare is accomplished.' Margaret, my innocent young wife, I have seen for the last time. Her, the crown that might have been of my earthly felicity—her, the one temptation to put aside the bitter cup which awaited me—her, sole seductress (O innocent seductress!) from the stern duties which my fate had imposed upon me—her, even her, I have sacrificed.

"Before I go, partly lest the innocent should be brought into question for acts almost exclusively mine, but still more lest the lesson and the warning which God, by my hand, has written in blood upon your guilty walls, should perish for want of its authentic exposition, hear my last dying avowal, that the murders which have desolated so many families within your walls, and made the household hearth

no sanctuary, age no charter of protection, are all due originally to my head, if not always to my hand, as the minister of a dreadful retribution.

"That account of my history, and my prospects, which you received from the Russian diplomatist, among some errors of little importance, is essentially correct. My father was not so immediately connected with English blood as is there represented. However, it is true that he claimed descent from an English family of even higher distinction than that which is assigned in the Russian statement. He was proud of this English descent, and the more so as the war with revolutionary France brought out more prominently than ever the moral and civil grandeur of England. This pride was generous, but it was imprudent in his situation. His immediate progenitors had been settled in Italy—at Rome first, but latterly at Milan; and his whole property, large and scattered, came, by the progress of the revolution, to stand under French domination. Many spoliations he suffered; but still he was too rich to be seriously injured. But he foresaw, in the progress of events, still greater perils menacing his most capital resources. Many of the states or princes in Italy were deeply in his debt; and, in the great convulsions which threatened his country, he saw that both the contending parties would find a colorable excuse for absolving themselves from engagements which pressed unpleasantly upon their finances. In this embarrassment he formed an intimacy with a French officer of high rank and high principle. My father's friend saw his danger, and advised him to enter the French service. In his younger days, my father had served extensively under many princes, and had found in every other military service a spirit of honor governing the conduct of the officers. Here only, and for the first time, he found ruffian manners and universal rapacity. He could not draw his sword in company with such men, nor in such a cause. But at length, under the pressure of necessity, he accepted (or rather bought with an immense bribe) the place of a commissary to the French forces in Italy. With this one resource, eventually he succeeded in

making good the whole of his public claims upon the Italian states. These vast sums he remitted, through various channels, to England, where he became proprietor in the funds to an immense amount. Incautiously, however, something of this transpired, and the result was doubly unfortunate; for, while his intentions were thus made known as finally pointing to England, which of itself made him an object of hatred and suspicion, it also diminished his means of bribery. These considerations, along with another, made some French officers of high rank and influence the bitter enemies of my father. My mother, whom he had married when holding a brigadier-general's commission in the Austrian service, was, by birth and by religion, a Jewess. She was of exquisite beauty, and had been sought in Morganatic marriage by an archduke of the Austrian family; but she had relied upon this plea, that hers was the purest and noblest blood among all Jewish families — that her family traced themselves, by tradition and a vast series of attestations under the hands of the Jewish high priests, to the Maccabees, and to the royal houses of Judea; and that for her it would be a degradation to accept even of a sovereign prince on the terms of such marriage. This was no vain pretension of ostentatious vanity. It was one which had been admitted as valid for time immemorial in Transylvania and adjacent countries, where my mother's family were rich and honored, and took their seat among the dignitaries of the land. The French officers I have alluded to, without capacity for anything so dignified as a deep passion, but merely in pursuit of a vagrant fancy that would, on the next day, have given place to another equally fleeting, had dared to insult my mother with proposals the most licentious—proposals as much below her rank and birth, as, at any rate, they would have been below her dignity of mind and her purity. These she had communicated to my father, who bitterly resented the chains of subordination which tied up his hands from avenging his injuries. Still his eye told a tale which his superiors could brook as little as they could the disdainful neglect of his wife. More than one had been concerned in

the injuries to my father and mother; more than one were interested in obtaining revenge. Things could be done in German towns, and by favor of old German laws or usages, which even in France could not have been tolerated. This my father's enemies well knew, but this my father also knew; and he endeavored to lay down his office of commissary. That, however, was a favor which he could not obtain. He was compelled to serve on the German campaign then commencing, and on the subsequent one of Friedland and Eylau. Here he was caught in some one of the snares laid for him; first trepanned into an act which violated some rule of the service; and then provoked into a breach of discipline against the general officer who had thus trepanned him. Now was the long-sought opportunity gained, and in that very quarter of Germany best fitted for improving it. My father was thrown into prison in your city, subjected to the atrocious oppression of your jailer, and the more detestable oppression of your local laws. The charges against him were thought even to affect his life, and he was humbled into suing for permission to send for his wife and children. Already, to his proud spirit, it was punishment enough that he should be reduced to sue for favor to one of his bitterest foes. But it was no part of their plan to refuse *that.* By way of expediting my mother's arrival, a military courier, with every facility for the journey, was forwarded to her without delay. My mother, her two daughters, and myself, were then residing in Venice. I had, through the aid of my father's connections in Austria, been appointed in the imperial service, and held a high commission for my age. But, on my father's marching northward with the French army, I had been recalled as an indispensable support to my mother. Not that my years could have made me such, for I had barely accomplished my twelfth year; but my premature growth, and my military station, had given me considerable knowledge of the world and presence of mind.

"Our journey I pass over; but as I approach your city, that sepulcher of honor and happiness to my poor family, my heart beats with frantic emotions. Never do I see that

venerable dome of your minster from the forest, but I curse its form, which reminds me of what we then surveyed for many a mile as we traversed the forest. For leagues before we approached the city, this object lay before us in relief upon the frosty blue sky; and still it seemed never to increase. Such was the complaint of my little sister Mariamne. Most innocent child! would that it never had increased for thy eyes, but remained forever at a distance! That same hour began the series of monstrous indignities which terminated the career of my ill-fated family. As we drew up to the city gates, the officer who inspected the passports, finding my mother and sisters described as Jewesses, which in my mother's ears (reared in a region where Jews are not dishonored) always sounded a title of distinction, summoned a subordinate agent, who in coarse terms demanded his toll. We presumed this to be a road tax for the carriage and horses, but we were quickly undeceived; a small sum was demanded for each of my sisters and my mother, as for so many head of cattle. I, fancying some mistake, spoke to the man temperately, and, to do him justice, he did not seem desirous of insulting us; but he produced a printed board, on which, along with the vilest animals, Jews and Jewesses were rated at so much a head. While we were debating the point, the officers of the gate wore a sneering smile upon their faces—the postilions were laughing together; and this, too, in the presence of three creatures whose exquisite beauty, in different styles, agreeably to their different ages, would have caused noblemen to have fallen down and worshiped. My mother, who had never yet met with any flagrant insult on account of her national distinctions, was too much shocked to be capable of speaking. I whispered to her a few words, recalling her to her native dignity of mind, paid the money, and we drove to the prison. But the hour was past at which we could be admitted, and, as Jewesses, my mother and sisters could not be allowed to stay in the city; they were to go into the Jewish quarter, a part of the suburb set apart for Jews, in which it was scarcely possible to obtain a lodging tolerably clean. My

father, on the next day, we found, to our horror, at the point of death. To my mother he did not tell the worst of what he had endured. To me he told that, driven to madness by the insults offered to him, he had upbraided the court-martial with their corrupt propensities, and had even mentioned that overtures had been made to him for quashing the proceedings in return for a sum of two millions of francs; and that his sole reason for not entertaining the proposal was his distrust of those who made it. 'They would have taken my money,' said he, 'and then found a pretext for putting me to death, that I might tell no secrets.' This was too near the truth to be tolerated; in concert with the local authorities, the military enemies of my father conspired against him —witnesses were suborned; and, finally, under some antiquated law of the place, he was subjected, in secret, to a mode of torture which still lingers in the east of Europe.

"He sank under the torture and the degradation. I, too, thoughtlessly, but by a natural movement of filial indignation, suffered the truth to escape me in conversing with my mother. And she——; but I will preserve the regular succession of things. My father died; but he had taken such measures, in concert with me, that his enemies should never benefit by his property. Meantime my mother and sisters had closed my father's eyes; had attended his remains to the grave; and in every act connected with this last sad rite had met with insults and degradations too mighty for human patience. My mother, now become incapable of self-command, in the fury of her righteous grief, publicly and in court denounced the conduct of the magistracy—taxed some of them with the vilest proposals to herself—taxed them as a body with having used instruments of torture upon my father; and, finally, accused them of collusion with the French military oppressors of the district. This last was a charge under which they quailed; for by that time the French had made themselves odious to all who retained a spark of patriotic feeling. My heart sank within me when I looked up at the bench, this tribunal of tyrants, all purple or livid with rage; when I looked at them alternately and

at my noble mother with her weeping daughters—these so powerless, those so basely vindictive, and locally so omnipotent. Willingly I would have sacrificed all my wealth for a simple permission to quit this infernal city with my poor female relations safe and undishonored. But far other were the intentions of that incensed magistracy. My mother was arrested, charged with some offense equal to petty treason, or *scandalum magnatum*, or the sowing of sedition; and, though what she said was true, where, alas! was she to look for evidence? Here was seen the want of gentlemen. Gentlemen, had they been even equally tyrannical, would have recoiled with shame from taking vengeance on a woman. And what a vengeance! O heavenly powers! that I should live to mention such a thing! Man that is born of woman, to inflict upon woman personal scourging on the bare back, and through the streets at noonday! Even for Christian women the punishment was severe which the laws assigned to the offense in question. But for Jewesses, by one of the ancient laws against that persecuted people, far heavier and more degrading punishments were annexed to almost every offense. What else could be looked for in a city which welcomed its Jewish guests by valuing them at its gates as brute beasts? Sentence was passed, and the punishment was to be inflicted on two separate days, with an interval between each—doubtless to prolong the tortures of mind, but under a vile pretense of alleviating the physical torture. Three days after would come the first day of punishment. My mother spent the time in reading her native Scriptures; she spent it in prayer and in musing; while her daughters clung and wept around her day and night—groveling on the ground at the feet of any people in authority that entered their mother's cell. That same interval—how was it passed by me? Now mark, my friend. Every man in office, or that could be presumed to bear the slightest influence, every wife, mother, sister, daughter of such men, I besieged morning, noon, and night. I wearied them with my supplications. I humbled myself to the dust; I, the haughtiest of God's creatures, knelt and prayed to them for the sake of my

mother. I besought them that I might undergo the punishment ten times over in her stead. And once or twice I *did* obtain the encouragement of a few natural tears — given more, however, as I was told, to my piety than to my mother's deserts. But rarely was I heard out with patience; and from some houses repelled with personal indignities. The day came: I saw my mother half undressed by the base officials; I heard the prison gates expand; I heard the trumpets of the magistracy sound. She had warned me what to do; I had warned myself. Would I sacrifice a retribution sacred and comprehensive, for the momentary triumph over an individual? If not, let me forbear to look out of doors; for I felt that in the selfsame moment in which I saw the dog of an executioner raise his accursed hand against my mother, swifter than the lightning would my dagger search his heart. When I heard the roar of the cruel mob, I paused —endured—forbore. I stole out by by-lanes of the city from my poor exhausted sisters, whom I left sleeping in each other's innocent arms, into the forest. There I listened to the shouting populace; there even I fancied that I could trace my poor mother's route by the course of the triumphant cries. There, even then, even then, I made—O silent forest! thou heardst me when I made—a vow that I have kept too faithfully. Mother, thou art avenged: sleep, daughter of Jerusalem! for at length the oppressor sleeps with thee. And thy poor son has paid, in discharge of his vow, the forfeit of his own happiness, of a paradise opening upon earth, of a heart as innocent as thine, and a face as fair.

"I returned, and found my mother returned. She slept by starts, but she was feverish and agitated; and when she awoke and first saw me, she blushed, as if I could think that real degradation had settled upon her. Then it was that I told her of my vow. Her eyes were lambent with fierce light for a moment; but, when I went on more eagerly to speak of my hopes and projects, she called me to her—kissed me, and whispered: 'Oh, not so, my son! think not of me—think not of vengeance—think only of poor Berenice and Mariamne.' Aye, that thought *was*

startling. Yet this magnanimous and forbearing mother, as I knew by the report of our one faithful female servant, had, in the morning, during her bitter trial, behaved as might have become a daughter of Judas Maccabæus: she had looked serenely upon the vile mob, and awed even them by her serenity; she had disdained to utter a shriek when the cruel lash fell upon her fair skin. There is a point that makes the triumph over natural feelings of pain easy or not easy—the degree in which we count upon the sympathy of the bystanders. My mother had it not in the beginning; but, long before the end, her celestial beauty, the divinity of injured innocence, the pleading of common womanhood in the minds of the lowest class, and the reaction of manly feeling in the men, had worked a great change in the mob. Some began now to threaten those who had been active in insulting her. The silence of awe and respect succeeded to noise and uproar; and feelings which they scarcely understood, mastered the rude rabble as they witnessed more and more the patient fortitude of the sufferer. Menaces began to rise toward the executioner. Things wore such an aspect that the magistrates put a sudden end to the scene.

"That day we received permission to go home to our poor house in the Jewish quarter. I know not whether you are learned enough in Jewish usages to be aware that in every Jewish house, where old traditions are kept up, there is one room consecrated to confusion; a room always locked up and sequestered from vulgar use, except on occasions of memorable affliction, where everything is purposely in disorder—broken—shattered—mutilated: to typify, by symbols appalling to the eye, that desolation which has so long trampled on Jerusalem, and the ravages of the boar within the vineyards of Judea. My mother, as a Hebrew princess, maintained all traditional customs. Even in this wretched suburb she had her 'chamber of desolation.' There it was that I and my sisters heard her last words. The rest of her sentence was to be carried into effect within a week. She, meantime, had disdained to utter any word

of fear; but that energy of self-control had made the suffering but the more bitter. Fever and dreadful agitation had succeeded. Her dreams showed sufficiently to us, who watched her couch, that terror for the future mingled with the sense of degradation for the past. Nature asserted her rights. But the more she shrank from the suffering, the more did she proclaim how severe it had been, and consequently how noble the self-conquest. Yet, as her weakness increased, so did her terror; until I besought her to take comfort, assuring her that, in case any attempt should be made to force her out again to public exposure, I would kill the man who came to execute the order—that we would all die together—and there would be a common end to her injuries and her fears. She was reassured by what I told her of my belief that no future attempt would be made upon her. She slept more tranquilly—but her fever increased; and slowly she slept away into the everlasting sleep which knows of no to-morrow.

"Here came a crisis in my fate. Should I stay and attempt to protect my sisters? But, alas! what power had I to do so among our enemies? Rachael and I consulted; and many a scheme we planned. Even while we consulted, and the very night after my mother had been committed to the Jewish burying ground, came an officer, bearing an order for me to repair to Vienna. Some officer in the French army, having watched the transaction respecting my parents, was filled with shame and grief. He wrote a statement of the whole to an Austrian officer of rank, my father's friend, who obtained from the emperor an order, claiming me as a page of his own, and an officer in the household service. O heavens! what a neglect that it did not include my sisters! However, the next best thing was that I should use my influence at the imperial court to get them passed to Vienna. This I did, to the utmost of my power. But seven months elapsed before I saw the emperor. If my applications ever met his eye he might readily suppose that your city, my friend, was as safe a place as another for my sisters. Nor did I myself know all its

dangers. At length, with the emperor's leave of absence, I returned. And what did I find? Eight months had passed, and the faithful Rachael had died. The poor sisters, clinging together, but now utterly bereft of friends, knew not which way to turn. In this abandonment they fell into the insidious hands of the ruffian jailer. My eldest sister, Berenice, the stateliest and noblest of beauties, had attracted this ruffian's admiration while she was in the prison with her mother. And when I returned to your city, armed with the imperial passports for all, I found that Berenice had died in the villain's custody; nor could I obtain anything beyond a legal certificate of her death. And, finally, the blooming, laughing Mariamne, she also had died—and of affliction for the loss of her sister. You, my friend, had been absent upon your travels during the calamitous history I have recited. You had seen neither my father nor my mother. But you came in time to take under your protection, from the abhorred wretch the jailer, my little broken-hearted Mariamne. And when sometimes you fancied that you had seen me under other circumstances, in her it was, my dear friend, and in her features that you saw mine.

"Now was the world a desert to me. I cared little, in the way of love, which way I turned. But in the way of hatred I cared everything. I transferred myself to the Russian service, with the view of gaining some appointment on the Polish frontier, which might put it in my power to execute my vow of destroying all the magistrates of your city. War, however, raged, and carried me into far other regions. It ceased, and there was little prospect that another generation would see it relighted; for the disturber of peace was a prisoner forever, and all nations were exhausted. Now, then, it became necessary that I should adopt some new mode for executing my vengeance; and the more so, because annually some were dying of those whom it was my mission to punish. A voice ascended to me, day and night, from the graves of my father and mother, calling for vengeance before it should be too late.

I took my measures thus: Many Jews were present at Waterloo. From among these, all irritated against Napoleon for the expectations he had raised, only to disappoint, by his great assembly of Jews at Paris, I selected eight, whom I knew familiarly as men hardened by military experience against the movements of pity. With these as my beagles, I hunted for some time in your forest before opening my regular campaign; and I am surprised that you did not hear of the death which met the executioner—him I mean who dared to lift his hand against my mother. This man I met by accident in the forest; and I slew him. I talked with the wretch, as a stranger at first, upon the memorable case of the Jewish lady. Had he relented, had he expressed compunction, *I* might have relented. But far otherwise: the dog, not dreaming to whom he spoke, exulted; he—— But why repeat the villain's words? I cut him to pieces. Next I did this: My agents I caused to matriculate separately at the college. They assumed the college dress. And now mark the solution of that mystery which caused such perplexity. Simply as students we all had an unsuspected admission at any house. Just then there was a common practice, as you will remember, among the younger students, of going out a masking—that is, of entering houses in the academic dress, and with the face masked. This practice subsisted even during the most intense alarm from the murderers; for the dress of the students was supposed to bring protection along with it. But, even after suspicion had connected itself with this dress, it was sufficient that I should appear unmasked at the head of the maskers, to insure them a friendly reception. Hence the facility with which death was inflicted, and that unaccountable absence of any motion toward an alarm. I took hold of my victim, and he looked at me with smiling security. Our weapons were hid under our academic robes; and even when we drew them out, and at the moment of applying them to the throat, they still supposed our gestures to be part of the pantomime we were performing. Did I relish this abuse of per-

sonal confidence in myself? No—I loathed it, and I grieved for its necessity; but my mother, a phantom not seen with bodily eyes, but ever present to my mind, continually ascended before me; and still I shouted aloud to my astounded victim, 'This comes from the Jewess! Hound of hounds! Do you remember the Jewess whom you dishonored, and the oaths which you broke in order that you might dishonor her, and the righteous law which you violated, and the cry of anguish from her son which you scoffed at?' Who I was, what I avenged, and whom, I made every man aware, and every woman, before I punished them. The details of the cases I need not repeat. One or two I was obliged, at the beginning, to commit to my Jews. The suspicion was thus, from the first, turned aside by the notoriety of my presence elsewhere; but I took care that none suffered who had not either been upon the guilty list of magistrates who condemned the mother, or of those who turned away with mockery from the supplication of the son.

"It pleased God, however, to place a mighty temptation in my path, which might have persuaded me to forego all thoughts of vengeance, to forget my vow, to forget the voices which invoked me from the grave. This was Margaret Liebenheim. Ah! how terrific appeared my duty of bloody retribution, after her angel's face and angel's voice had calmed me. With respect to her grandfather, strange it is to mention, that never did my innocent wife appear so lovely as precisely in the relation of granddaughter. So beautiful was her goodness to the old man, and so divine was the childlike innocence on her part, contrasted with the guilty recollections associated with him—for he was among the guiltiest toward my mother—still I delayed *his* punishment to the last; and, for his child's sake, I would have pardoned him—nay, I had resolved to do so, when a fierce Jew, who had a deep malignity toward this man, swore that he would accomplish *his* vengeance at all events, and perhaps might be obliged to include Margaret in the ruin, unless I adhered to the original scheme. Then I

yielded; for circumstances armed this man with momentary power. But the night fixed on was one in which I had reason to know that my wife would be absent; for so I had myself arranged with her, and the unhappy counter-arrangement I do not yet understand. Let me add, that the sole purpose of my clandestine marriage was to sting her grandfather's mind with the belief that *his* family had been dishonored, even as he had dishonored mine. He learned, as I took care that he should, that his granddaughter carried about with her the promises of a mother, and did not know that she had the sanction of a wife. This discovery made him, in one day, become eager for the marriage he had previously opposed; and this discovery also embittered the misery of his death. At that moment I attempted to think only of my mother's wrongs; but, in spite of all I could do, this old man appeared to me in the light of Margarêt's grandfather—and, had I been left to myself, he would have been saved. As it was, never was horror equal to mine when I met her flying to his succor. I had relied upon her absence; and the misery of that moment, when her eye fell upon me in the very act of seizing her grandfather, far transcended all else that I have suffered in these terrific scenes. She fainted in my arms, and I and another carried her upstairs and procured water. Meantime her grandfather had been murdered, even while Margaret fainted. I had, however, under the fear of discovery, though never anticipating a rencounter with herself, forestalled the explanation requisite in such a case to make my conduct intelligible. I had told her, under feigned names, the story of my mother and my sisters. She knew their wrongs: she had heard me contend for the right of vengeance. Consequently, in our parting interview, one word only was required to place myself in a new position to her thoughts. I needed only to say I was that son; that unhappy mother, so miserably degraded and outraged, was mine.

"As to the jailer, he was met by a party of us. Not suspecting that any of us could be connected with the

family, he was led to talk of the most hideous details with regard to my poor Berenice. The child had not, as had been insinuated, aided her own degradation, but had nobly sustained the dignity of her sex and her family. Such advantages as the monster pretended to have gained over her—sick, desolate, and latterly delirious—were, by his own confession, not obtained without violence. This was too much. Forty thousand lives, had he possessed them, could not have gratified my thirst for revenge. Yet, had he but showed courage, he should have died the death of a soldier. But the wretch showed cowardice the most abject, and——, but you know his fate.

"Now, then, all is finished, and human nature is avenged. Yet, if you complain of the bloodshed and the terror, think of the wrongs which created my rights; think of the sacrifice by which I gave a tenfold strength to those rights; think of the necessity for a dreadful concussion and shock to society, in order to carry my lesson into the councils of princes.

"This will now have been effected. And ye, victims of dishonor, will be glorified in your deaths; ye will not have suffered in vain, nor died without a monument. Sleep, therefore, sister Berenice—sleep, gentle Mariamne, in peace. And thou, noble mother, let the outrages sown in thy dishonor, rise again and blossom in wide harvests of honor for the women of thy afflicted race. Sleep, daughters of Jerusalem, in the sanctity of your sufferings. And thou, if it be possible, even more beloved daughter of a Christian fold, whose company was too soon denied to him in life, open thy grave to receive *him*, who, in the hour of death, wishes to remember no title which he wore on earth but that of thy chosen and adoring lover,

"Maximilian."

Introduction to Melmoth the Wanderer

Balzac likens the hero of one of his short stories to "Molière's *Don Juan*, Goethe's *Faust*, Byron's *Manfred*, Maturin's *Melmoth*—great allegorical figures drawn by the greatest men of genius in Europe."

"But what is 'Melmoth'? Why is *he* classed as 'a great allegorical figure'?" exclaimed many a surprised reader. Few had perused—few know at this day—the terrible story of Melmoth the Wanderer, half man, half devil, who has bartered away his soul for the glory of power and knowledge, and, repenting of his bargain, tries again and again to persuade some desperate human to change places with him—penetrates to the refuge of misery, the death chamber, even the madhouse, seeking one in such utter agony as to accept his help, and take his curse—but ever fails.

Why this extraordinary tale, told with wild and compelling sweep, has remained so deep in oblivion, appears immediately on a glance at the original. The author, Charles Robert Maturin, a needy, eccentric Irish clergyman of 1780–1824, could cause intense suspense and horror—could read keenly into human motives—could teach an awful moral lesson in the guise of fascinating fiction, but he could not stick to a long story with simplicity. His dozens of shifting scenes, his fantastic coils of "tales within tales" sadly perplex the reader of "Melmoth" in the first version. It is hoped, however, that the present selection, by its directness and the clearness of the story thread, may please the modern reader better than the involved original, and bring before a wider public some of the most gripping descriptions ever penned in English.

In Volume IV of these stories comes a tale, "Melmoth Reconciled," which Balzac himself wrote, while under the spell of Maturin's "great allegorical figure." Here the unhappy being succeeds in his purpose. The story takes place in mocking, careless Paris, "that branch establishment of hell"; a cashier, on the eve of embezzlement and detection, cynically accedes to Melmoth's terms, and accepts his help—with what unlooked-for results, the reader may see.

Charles Robert Maturin

Melmoth the Wanderer

John Melmoth, student at Trinity College, Dublin, having journeyed to County Wicklow for attendance at the deathbed of his miserly uncle, finds the old man, even in his last moments, tortured by avarice, and by suspicion of all around him. He whispers to John:

"I WANT a glass of wine, it would keep me alive for some hours, but there is not one I can trust to get it for me,—*they'd steal a bottle, and ruin me.*" John was greatly shocked. "Sir, for God's sake, let *me* get a glass of wine for you." "Do you know where?" said the old man, with an expression in his face John could not understand. "No, Sir; you know I have been rather a stranger here, Sir." "Take this key," said old Melmoth, after a violent spasm; "take this key, there is wine in that closet, —*Madeira.* I always told them there was nothing there, but they did not believe me, or I should not have been robbed as I have been. At one time I said it was whisky, and then I fared worse than ever, for they drank twice as much of it."

John took the key from his uncle's hand; the dying man pressed it as he did so, and John, interpreting this as a mark of kindness, returned the pressure. He was undeceived by the whisper that followed,—"John, my lad, don't drink any of that wine while you are there." "Good God!" said John, indignantly throwing the key on the bed; then, recollecting that the miserable being before him was no object of resentment, he gave the promise required, and entered the closet, which no foot but that of old Melmoth had entered for nearly sixty years. He had some difficulty in finding out the wine, and indeed stayed long enough to

justify his uncle's suspicions,—but his mind was agitated, and his hand unsteady. He could not but remark his uncle's extraordinary look, that had the ghastliness of fear superadded to that of death, as he gave him permission to enter his closet. He could not but see the looks of horror which the women exchanged as he approached it. And, finally, when he was in it, his memory was malicious enough to suggest some faint traces of a story, too horrible for imagination, connected with it. He remembered in one moment most distinctly, that no one but his uncle had ever been known to enter it for many years.

Before he quitted it, he held up the dim light, and looked around him with a mixture of terror and curiosity. There was a great deal of decayed and useless lumber, such as might be supposed to be heaped up to rot in a miser's closet; but John's eyes were in a moment, and as if by magic, riveted on a portrait that hung on the wall, and appeared, even to his untaught eye, far superior to the tribe of family pictures that are left to molder on the walls of a family mansion. It represented a man of middle age. There was nothing remarkable in the costume, or in the countenance, but *the eyes*, John felt, were such as one feels they wish they had never seen, and feels they can never forget. Had he been acquainted with the poetry of Southey, he might have often exclaimed in his after-life,

> "Only the eyes had life,
> They gleamed with demon light."—THALABA.

From an impulse equally resistless and painful, he approached the portrait, held the candle toward it, and could distinguish the words on the border of the painting,—Jno. Melmoth, anno 1646. John was neither timid by nature, nor nervous by constitution, nor superstitious from habit, yet he continued to gaze in stupid horror on this singular picture, till, aroused by his uncle's cough, he hurried into his room. The old man swallowed the wine. He appeared a little revived; it was long since he had tasted such a

cordial,—his heart appeared to expand to a momentary confidence. "John, what did you see in that room?" "Nothing, Sir." "That's a lie; everyone wants to cheat or to rob me." "Sir, I don't want to do either." "Well, what did you see that you—you took notice of?" "Only a picture, Sir." "A picture, Sir!—the original is still alive." John, though under the impression of his recent feelings, could not but look incredulous. "John," whispered his uncle;—"John, they say I am dying of this and that; and one says it is for want of nourishment, and one says it is for want of medicine,—but, John," and his face looked hideously ghastly, "I am dying of a fright. That man," and he extended his meager arm toward the closet, as if he was pointing to a living being; "that man, I have good reason to know, is alive still." "How is that possible, Sir?" said John involuntarily, "the date on the picture is 1646." "You have seen it,—you have noticed it," said his uncle. "Well,"—he rocked and nodded on his bolster for a moment, then, grasping John's hand with an unutterable look, he exclaimed, "You will see him again, he is alive." Then, sinking back on his bolster, he fell into a kind of sleep or stupor, his eyes still open, and fixed on John.

The house was now perfectly silent, and John had time and space for reflection. More thoughts came crowding on him than he wished to welcome, but they would not be repulsed. He thought of his uncle's habits and character, turned the matter over and over again in his mind, and he said to himself, "The last man on earth to be superstitious. He never thought of anything but the price of stocks, and the rate of exchange, and my college expenses, that hung heavier at his heart than all; and such a man to die of a fright,—a ridiculous fright, that a man living 150 years ago is alive still, and yet—he is dying." John paused, for facts will confute the most stubborn logician. "With all his hardness of mind, and of heart, he is dying of a fright. I heard it in the kitchen, I have heard it from himself,—he could not be deceived. If I had ever heard

he was nervous, or fanciful, or superstitious, but a character so contrary to all these impressions;—a man that, as poor Butler says, in his 'Remains of the Antiquarian,' would have 'sold Christ over again for the numerical piece of silver which Judas got for him,'—such a man to die of fear! Yet he *is* dying," said John, glancing his fearful eye on the contracted nostril, the glazed eye, the drooping jaw, the whole horrible apparatus of the *facies Hippocratica* displayed, and soon to cease its display.

Old Melmoth at this moment seemed to be in a deep stupor; his eyes lost that little expression they had before, and his hands, that had convulsively been catching at the blankets, let go their short and quivering grasp, and lay extended on the bed like the claws of some bird that had died of hunger,—so meager, so yellow, so spread. John, unaccustomed to the sight of death, believed this to be only a sign that he was going to sleep; and, urged by an impulse for which he did not attempt to account to himself, caught up the miserable light, and once more ventured into the forbidden room,—the *blue chamber* of the dwelling. The motion roused the dying man;—he sat bolt upright in his bed. This John could not see, for he was now in the closet; but he heard the groan, or rather the choked and gurgling rattle of the throat, that announces the horrible conflict between muscular and mental convulsion. He started, turned away; but, as he turned away, he thought he saw the eyes of the portrait, on which his own was fixed, *move*, and hurried back to his uncle's bedside.

Old Melmoth died in the course of that night, and died as he had lived, in a kind of avaricious delirium. John could not have imagined a scene so horrible as his last hours presented. He cursed and blasphemed about three halfpence, missing, as he said, some weeks before, in an account of change with his groom, about hay to a starved horse that he kept. Then he grasped John's hand, and asked him to give him the sacrament. "If I send to the clergyman, he will charge me something for it, which I cannot pay,—I cannot. They say I am rich,—look at this

blanket;—but I would not mind that, if I could save my soul." And, raving, he added, "Indeed, Doctor, I am a very poor man. I never troubled a clergyman before, and all I want is, that you will grant me two trifling requests, very little matters in your way,—save my soul, and (whispering) make interest to get me a parish coffin,—I have not enough left to bury me. I always told everyone I was poor, but the more I told them so, the less they believed me."

John, greatly shocked, retired from the bedside, and sat down in a distant corner of the room. The women were again in the room, which was very dark. Melmoth was silent from exhaustion, and there was a deathlike pause for some time. At this moment John saw the door open, and a figure appear at it, who looked round the room, and then quietly and deliberately retired, but not before John had discovered in his face the living original of the portrait. His first impulse was to utter an exclamation of terror, but his breath felt stopped. He was then rising to pursue the figure, but a moment's reflection checked him. What could be more absurd, than to be alarmed or amazed at a resemblance between a living man and the portrait of a dead one! The likeness was doubtless strong enough to strike him even in that darkened room, but it was doubtless only a likeness; and though it might be imposing enough to terrify an old man of gloomy and retired habits, and with a broken constitution, John resolved it should not produce the same effect on him.

But while he was applauding himself for this resolution, the door opened, and the figure appeared at it, beckoning and nodding to him, with a familiarity somewhat terrifying. John now started up, determined to pursue it; but the pursuit was stopped by the weak but shrill cries of his uncle, who was struggling at once with the agonies of death and his housekeeper. The poor woman, anxious for her master's reputation and her own, was trying to put on him a clean shirt and nightcap, and Melmoth, who had just sensation enough to perceive they were taking some-

thing from him, continued exclaiming feebly, "They are robbing me,—robbing me in my last moments,—robbing a dying man. John, won't you assist me,—I shall die a beggar; they are taking my last shirt,—I shall die a beggar." ——And the miser died.

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A few days after the funeral, the will was opened before proper witnesses, and John was found to be left sole heir to his uncle's property, which, though originally moderate, had, by his grasping habits, and parsimonious life, become very considerable.

As the attorney who read the will concluded, he added, "There are some words here, at the corner of the parchment, which do not appear to be part of the will, as they are neither in the form of a codicil, nor is the signature of the testator affixed to them; but, to the best of my belief, they are in the handwriting of the deceased." As he spoke he showed the lines to Melmoth, who immediately recognized his uncle's hand (that perpendicular and penurious hand, that seems determined to make the most of the very paper, thriftily abridging every word, and leaving scarce an atom of margin), and read, not without some emotion, the following words: "I enjoin my nephew and heir, John Melmoth, to remove, destroy, or cause to be destroyed, the portrait inscribed J. Melmoth, 1646, hanging in my closet. I also enjoin him to search for a manuscript, which I think he will find in the third and lowest left-hand drawer of the mahogany chest standing under that portrait,—it is among some papers of no value, such as manuscript sermons, and pamphlets on the improvement of Ireland, and such stuff; he will distinguish it by its being tied round with a black tape, and the paper being very moldy and discolored. He may read it if he will;—I think he had better not. At all events, I adjure him, if there be any power in the adjuration of a dying man, to burn it."

After reading this singular memorandum, the business of the meeting was again resumed; and as old Melmoth's

will was very clear and legally worded, all was soon settled, the party dispersed, and John Melmoth was left alone.

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He resolutely entered the closet, shut the door, and proceeded to search for the manuscript. It was soon found, for the directions of old Melmoth were forcibly written, and strongly remembered. The manuscript, old, tattered, and discolored, was taken from the very drawer in which it was mentioned to be laid. Melmoth's hands felt as cold as those of his dead uncle, when he drew the blotted pages from their nook. He sat down to read,—there was a dead silence through the house. Melmoth looked wistfully at the candles, snuffed them, and still thought they looked dim, (perchance he thought they burned blue, but such thought he kept to himself). Certain it is, he often changed his posture, and would have changed his chair, had there been more than one in the apartment.

He sank for a few moments into a fit of gloomy abstraction, till the sound of the clock striking twelve made him start,—it was the only sound he had heard for some hours, and the sounds produced by inanimate things, while all living beings around are as dead, have at such an hour an effect indescribably awful. John looked at his manuscript with some reluctance, opened it, paused over the first lines, and as the wind sighed round the desolate apartment, and the rain pattered with a mournful sound against the dismantled window, wished——what did he wish for?—he wished the sound of the wind less dismal, and the dash of the rain less monotonous.——He may be forgiven, it was past midnight, and there was not a human being awake but himself within ten miles when he began to read.

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The manuscript was discolored, obliterated, and mutilated beyond any that had ever before exercised the patience of a reader. Michaelis himself, scrutinizing into the pretended autograph of St. Mark at Venice, never had a harder time of it.—Melmoth could make out only a sentence here and there. The writer, it appeared, was an

Englishman of the name of Stanton, who had traveled abroad shortly after the Restoration. Traveling was not then attended with the facilities which modern improvement has introduced, and scholars and literati, the intelligent, the idle, and the curious, wandered over the Continent for years, like *Tom Corvat*, though they had the modesty, on their return, to entitle the result of their multiplied observations and labors only "crudities."

Stanton, about the year 1676, was in Spain; he was, like most of the travelers of that age, a man of literature, intelligence, and curiosity, but ignorant of the language of the country, and fighting his way at times from convent to convent, in quest of what was called "Hospitality," that is, obtaining board and lodging on the condition of holding a debate in Latin, on some point theological or metaphysical, with any monk who would become the champion of the strife. Now, as the theology was Catholic, and the metaphysics Aristotelian, Stanton sometimes wished himself at the miserable Posada from whose filth and famine he had been fighting his escape; but though his reverend antagonists always denounced his creed, and comforted themselves, even in defeat, with the assurance that he must be damned, on the double score of his being a heretic and an Englishman, they were obliged to confess that his Latin was good, and his logic unanswerable; and he was allowed, in most cases, to sup and sleep in peace. This was not doomed to be his fate on the night of the 17th August 1677, when he found himself in the plains of Valencia, deserted by a cowardly guide, who had been terrified by the sight of a cross erected as a memorial of a murder, had slipped off his mule unperceived, crossing himself every step he took on his retreat from the heretic, and left Stanton amid the terrors of an approaching storm, and the dangers of an unknown country. The sublime and yet softened beauty of the scenery around, had filled the soul of Stanton with delight, and he enjoyed that delight as Englishmen generally do, silently.

The magnificent remains of two dynasties that had

passed away, the ruins of Roman palaces, and of Moorish fortresses, were around and above him;—the dark and heavy thunder clouds that advanced slowly, seemed like the shrouds of these specters of departed greatness; they approached, but did not yet overwhelm or conceal them, as if Nature herself was for once awed by the power of man; and far below, the lovely valley of Valencia blushed and burned in all the glory of sunset, like a bride receiving the last glowing kiss of the bridegroom before the approach of night. Stanton gazed around. The difference between the architecture of the Roman and Moorish ruins struck him. Among the former are the remains of a theater, and something like a public place; the latter present only the remains of fortresses, embattled, castellated, and fortified from top to bottom,—not a loophole for pleasure to get in by,—the loopholes were only for arrows; all denoted military power and despotic subjugation *à l'outrance*. The contrast might have pleased a philosopher, and he might have indulged in the reflection, that though the ancient Greeks and Romans were savages (as Dr. Johnson says all people who want a press must be, and he says truly), yet they were wonderful savages for their time, for they alone have left *traces of their taste for pleasure* in the countries they conquered, in their superb theaters, temples (which were also dedicated to pleasure one way or another), and baths, while other conquering bands of savages never left anything behind them but traces of their rage for power. So thought Stanton, as he still saw strongly defined, though darkened by the darkening clouds, the huge skeleton of a Roman amphitheater, its arched and gigantic colonnades now admitting a gleam of light, and now commingling with the purple thunder cloud; and now the solid and heavy mass of a Moorish fortress, no light playing between its impermeable walls,—the image of power, dark, isolated, impenetrable. Stanton forgot his cowardly guide, his loneliness, his danger amid an approaching storm and an inhospitable country, where his name and country would shut every door against him, and every peal of thunder

would be supposed justified by the daring intrusion of a heretic in the dwelling of an *old Christian*, as the Spanish Catholics absurdly term themselves, to mark the distinction between them and the baptized Moors.

All this was forgot in contemplating the glorious and awful scenery before him,—light struggling with darkness, —and darkness menacing a light still more terrible, and announcing its menace in the blue and livid mass of cloud that hovered like a destroying angel in the air, its arrows aimed, but their direction awfully indefinite. But he ceased to forget these local and petty dangers, as the sublimity of romance would term them, when he saw the first flash of the lightning, broad and red as the banners of an insulting army whose motto is *Væ victis*, shatter to atoms the remains of a Roman tower;—the rifted stones rolled down the hill, and fell at the feet of Stanton. He stood appalled, and, awaiting his summons from the Power in whose eye pyramids, palaces, and the worms whose toil has formed them, and the worms who toil out their existence under their shadow or their pressure, are perhaps all alike contemptible, he stood collected, and for a moment felt that defiance of danger which danger itself excites, and we love to encounter it as a physical enemy, to bid it "do its worst," and feel that its worst will perhaps be ultimately its best for us. He stood and saw another flash dart its bright, brief, and malignant glance over the ruins of ancient power, and the luxuriance of recent fertility. Singular contrast! The relics of art forever decaying,—the productions of nature forever renewed.—(Alas! for what purpose are they renewed, better than to mock at the perishable monuments which men try in vain to rival them by.) The pyramids themselves must perish, but the grass that grows between their disjointed stones will be renewed from year to year.

Stanton was thinking thus, when all power of thought was suspended, by seeing two persons bearing between them the body of a young, and apparently very lovely girl, who had been struck dead by the lightning. Stanton ap-

proached, and heard the voices of the bearers repeating, "There is none who will mourn for her!" "There is none who will mourn for her!" said other voices, as two more bore in their arms the blasted and blackened figure of what had once been a man, comely and graceful;—"there is not *one* to mourn for her now!" They were lovers, and he had been consumed by the flash that had destroyed her, while in the act of endeavoring to defend her. As they were about to remove the bodies, a person approached with a calmness of step and demeanor, as if he were alone unconscious of danger, and incapable of fear; and after looking on them for some time, burst into a laugh so loud, wild, and protracted, that the peasants, starting with as much horror at the sound as at that of the storm, hurried away, bearing the corpses with them. Even Stanton's fears were subdued by his astonishment, and, turning to the stranger, who remained standing on the same spot, he asked the reason of such an outrage on humanity. The stranger, slowly turning round, and disclosing a countenance which ——(Here the manuscript was illegible for a few lines), said in English—— (A long hiatus followed here, and the next passage that was legible, though it proved to be a continuation of the narrative, was but a fragment.)

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The terrors of the night rendered Stanton a sturdy and unappeasable applicant; and the shrill voice of the old woman, repeating, "no heretic—no English—Mother of God protect us—avaunt Satan!"—combined with the clatter of the wooden casement (peculiar to the houses in Valencia) which she opened to discharge her volley of anathematization, and shut again as the lightning glanced through the aperture, were unable to repel his importunate request for admittance, in a night whose terrors ought to soften all the miserable petty local passions into one awful feeling of fear for the Power who caused it, and compassion for those who were exposed to it.—But Stanton felt there was something more than national bigotry in the exclamations of the old woman; there was a peculiar and

personal horror of the English.—And he was right; but this did not diminish the eagerness of his . . . .

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The house was handsome and spacious, but the melancholy appearance of desertion . . . .

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—The benches were by the wall, but there were none to sit there; the tables were spread in what had been the hall, but it seemed as if none had gathered round them for many years;—the clock struck audibly, there was no voice of mirth or of occupation to drown its sound; time told his awful lesson to silence alone;—the hearths were black with fuel long since consumed;—the family portraits looked as if they were the only tenants of the mansion; they seemed to say, from their moldering frames, "there are none to gaze on us;" and the echo of the steps of Stanton and his feeble guide, was the only sound audible between the peals of thunder that rolled still awfully, but more distantly,—every peal like the exhausted murmurs of a spent heart. As they passed on, a shriek was heard. Stanton paused, and fearful images of the dangers to which travelers on the Continent are exposed in deserted and remote habitations, came into his mind. "Don't heed it," said the old woman, lighting him on with a miserable lamp;—"it is only he . . . .

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The old woman having now satisfied herself, by ocular demonstration, that her English guest, even if he was the devil, had neither horn, hoof, nor tail, that he could bear the sign of the cross without changing his form, and that, when he spoke, not a puff of sulphur came out of his mouth, began to take courage, and at length commenced her story, which, weary and comfortless as Stanton was, ...

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Every obstacle was now removed; parents and relations at last gave up all opposition, and the young pair were united. Never was there a lovelier,—they seemed like

angels who had only anticipated by a few years their celestial and eternal union. The marriage was solemnized with much pomp, and a few days after there was a feast in that very wainscoted chamber which you paused to remark was so gloomy. It was that night hung with rich tapestry, representing the exploits of the Cid, particularly that of his burning a few Moors who refused to renounce their accursed religion. They were represented beautifully tortured, writhing and howling, and "Mahomet! Mahomet!" issuing out of their mouths, as they called on him in their burning agonies;—you could almost hear them scream. At the upper end of the room, under a splendid estrade, over which was an image of the blessed Virgin, sat Donna Isabella de Cardoza, mother to the bride, and near her Donna Ines, the bride, on rich almohadas; the bridegroom sat opposite to her, and though they never spoke to each other, their eyes, slowly raised, but suddenly withdrawn (those eyes that blushed), told to each other the delicious secret of their happiness. Don Pedro de Cardoza had assembled a large party in honor of his daughter's nuptials; among them was an Englishman of the name of *Melmoth*, a traveler; no one knew who had brought him there. He sat silent like the rest, while the iced waters and the sugared wafers were presented to the company. The night was intensely hot, and the moon glowed like a sun over the ruins of Saguntum; the embroidered blinds flapped heavily, as if the wind made an effort to raise them in vain, and then desisted.

(Another defect in the manuscript occurred here, but it was soon supplied.)

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The company were dispersed through various alleys of the garden; the bridegroom and bride wandered through one where the delicious perfume of the orange trees mingled itself with that of the myrtles in blow. On their return to the hall, both of them asked, Had the company heard the exquisite sounds that floated through the garden just before they quitted it? No one had heard them. They

expressed their surprise. The Englishman had never quitted the hall; it was said he smiled with a most particular and extraordinary expression as the remark was made. His silence had been noticed before, but it was ascribed to his ignorance of the Spanish language, an ignorance that Spaniards are not anxious either to expose or remove by speaking to a stranger. The subject of the music was not again reverted to till the guests were seated at supper, when Donna Ines and her young husband, exchanging a smile of delighted surprise, exclaimed they heard the same delicious sounds floating round them. The guests listened, but no one else could hear it;—everyone felt there was something extraordinary in this. Hush! was uttered by every voice almost at the same moment. A dead silence followed,—you would think, from their intent looks, that they listened with their very eyes. This deep silence, contrasted with the splendor of the feast, and the light effused from torches held by the domestics, produced a singular effect,—it seemed for some moments like an assembly of the dead. The silence was interrupted, though the cause of wonder had not ceased, by the entrance of Father Olavida, the Confessor of Donna Isabella, who had been called away previous to the feast, to administer extreme unction to a dying man in the neighborhood. He was a priest of uncommon sanctity, beloved in the family, and respected in the neighborhood, where he had displayed uncommon taste and talents for exorcism;—in fact, this was the good Father's *forte*, and he piqued himself on it accordingly. The devil never fell into worse hands than Father Olavida's, for when he was so contumacious as to resist Latin, and even the first verses of the Gospel of St. John in Greek, which the good Father never had recourse to but in cases of extreme stubbornness and difficulty,—(here Stanton recollected the English story of the *Boy of Bilson*, and blushed even in Spain for his countrymen),—then he always applied to the Inquisition; and if the devils were ever so obstinate before, they were always seen to fly out of the possessed, just as, in the midst of their cries

(no doubt of blasphemy), they were tied to the stake. Some held out even till the flames surrounded them; but even the most stubborn must have been dislodged when the operation was over, for the devil himself could no longer tenant a crisp and glutinous lump of cinders. Thus Father Olavida's fame spread far and wide, and the Cardoza family had made uncommon interest to procure him for a Confessor, and happily succeeded. The ceremony he had just been performing had cast a shade over the good Father's countenance, but it dispersed as he mingled among the guests, and was introduced to them. Room was soon made for him, and he happened accidentally to be seated opposite the Englishman. As the wine was presented to him, Father Olavida (who, as I observed, was a man of singular sanctity) prepared to utter a short internal prayer. He hesitated,—trembled,—desisted; and, putting down the wine, wiped the drops from his forehead with the sleeve of his habit. Donna Isabella gave a sign to a domestic, and other wine of a higher quality was offered to him. His lips moved, as if in the effort to pronounce a benediction on it and the company, but the effort again failed; and the change in his countenance was so extraordinary, that it was perceived by all the guests. He felt the sensation that his extraordinary appearance excited, and attempted to remove it by again endeavoring to lift the cup to his lips. So strong was the anxiety with which the company watched him, that the only sound heard in that spacious and crowded hall was the rustling of his habit as he attempted to lift the cup to his lips once more—in vain. The guests sat in astonished silence. Father Olavida alone remained standing; but at that moment the Englishman rose, and appeared determined to fix Olavida's regards by a gaze like that of fascination. Olavida rocked, reeled, grasped the arm of a page, and at last, closing his eyes for a moment, as if to escape the horrible fascination of that unearthly glare (the Englishman's eyes were observed by all the guests, from the moment of his entrance, to effuse a most fearful and preternatural luster), exclaimed, "Who is among

us?—Who?—I cannot utter a blessing while he is here. I cannot feel one. Where he treads, the earth is parched!—Where he breathes, the air is fire!—Where he feeds, the food is poison!—Where he turns his glance is lightning!—*Who is among us?—Who?*" repeated the priest in the agony of adjuration, while his cowl fallen back, his few thin hairs around the scalp instinct and alive with terrible emotion, his outspread arms protruded from the sleeves of his habit, and extended toward the awful stranger, suggested the idea of an inspired being in the dreadful rapture of prophetic denunciation. He stood—still stood, and the Englishman stood calmly opposite to him. There was an agitated irregularity in the attitudes of those around them, which contrasted strongly the fixed and stern postures of those two, who remained gazing silently at each other. "Who knows him?" exclaimed Olavida, starting apparently from a trance; "who knows him? who brought him here?"

The guests severally disclaimed all knowledge of the Englishman, and each asked the other in whispers, "who *had* brought him there?" Father Olavida then pointed his arm to each of the company, and asked each individually, "Do you know him?" No! no! no!" was uttered with vehement emphasis by every individual. "But I know him," said Olavida, "by these cold drops!" and he wiped them off;—"by these convulsed joints!" and he attempted to sign the cross, but could not. He raised his voice, and evidently speaking with increased difficulty,—"By this bread and wine, which the faithful receive as the body and blood of Christ, but which *his* presence converts into matter as viperous as the suicide foam of the dying Judas,—by all these—I know him, and command him to be gone!—He is—he is ——" and he bent forward as he spoke, and gazed on the Englishman with an expression which the mixture of rage, hatred, and fear rendered terrible. All the guests rose at these words,—the whole company now presented two singular groups, that of the amazed guests all collected together, and repeating, "Who, what is he?" and that of the Englishman,

who stood unmoved, and Olavida, who dropped dead in the attitude of pointing to him.

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The body was removed into another room, and the departure of the Englishman was not noticed till the company returned to the hall. They sat late together, conversing on this extraordinary circumstance, and finally agreed to remain in the house, lest the evil spirit (for they believed the Englishman no better) should take certain liberties with the corse by no means agreeable to a Catholic, particularly as he had manifestly died without the benefit of the last sacraments. Just as this laudable resolution was formed, they were roused by cries of horror and agony from the bridal chamber, where the young pair had retired.

They hurried to the door, but the father was first. They burst it open, and found the bride a corse in the arms of her husband.

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He never recovered his reason; the family deserted the mansion rendered terrible by so many misfortunes. One apartment is still tenanted by the unhappy maniac; his were the cries you heard as you traversed the deserted rooms. He is for the most part silent during the day, but at midnight he always exclaims, in a voice frightfully piercing, and hardly human, "They are coming! they are coming!" and relapses into profound silence.

The funeral of Father Olavida was attended by an extraordinary circumstance. He was interred in a neighboring convent; and the reputation of his sanctity, joined to the interest caused by his extraordinary death, collected vast numbers at the ceremony. His funeral sermon was preached by a monk of distinguished eloquence, appointed for the purpose. To render the effect of his discourse more powerful, the corse, extended on a bier, with its face uncovered, was placed in the aisle. The monk took his text from one of the prophets,—"Death is gone up into our palaces." He expatiated on mortality, whose approach, whether abrupt or lingering, is alike awful to man.—He spoke of the vicissi-

tudes of empires with much eloquence and learning, but his audience were not observed to be much affected.—He cited various passages from the lives of the saints, descriptive of the glories of martyrdom, and the heroism of those who had bled and blazed for Christ and his blessed mother, but they appeared still waiting for something to touch them more deeply. When he inveighed against the tyrants under whose bloody persecution those holy men suffered, his hearers were roused for a moment, for it is always easier to excite a passion than a moral feeling. But when he spoke of the dead, and pointed with emphatic gesture to the corse, as it lay before them cold and motionless, every eye was fixed, and every ear became attentive. Even the lovers, who, under pretense of dipping their fingers into the holy water, were contriving to exchange amorous billets, forbore for one moment this interesting intercourse, to listen to the preacher. He dwelt with much energy on the virtues of the deceased, whom he declared to be a particular favorite of the Virgin; and enumerating the various losses that would be caused by his departure to the community to which he belonged, to society, and to religion at large; he at last worked up himself to a vehement expostulation with the Deity on the occasion. "Why hast thou," he exclaimed, "why hast thou, Oh God! thus dealt with us? Why hast thou snatched from our sight this glorious saint, whose merits, if properly applied, doubtless would have been sufficient to atone for the apostasy of St. Peter, the opposition of St. Paul (previous to his conversion), and even the treachery of Judas himself? Why hast thou, Oh God! snatched him from us?"—and a deep and hollow voice from among the congregation answered,—"Because he deserved his fate." The murmurs of approbation with which the congregation honored this apostrophe half drowned this extraordinary interruption; and though there was some little commotion in the immediate vicinity of the speaker, the rest of the audience continued to listen intently. "What," proceeded the preacher, pointing to the corse, "what hath laid thee there, servant of God?"—"Pride, ignorance, and fear," answered the same

voice, in accents still more thrilling. The disturbance now became universal. The preacher paused, and a circle opening, disclosed the figure of a monk belonging to the convent, who stood among them.

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After all the usual modes of admonition, exhortation, and discipline had been employed, and the bishop of the diocese, who, under the report of these extraordinary circumstances, had visited the convent in person to obtain some explanation from the contumacious monk in vain, it was agreed, in a chapter extraordinary, to surrender him to the power of the Inquisition. He testified great horror when this determination was made known to him,—and offered to tell over and over again all that he *could* relate of the cause of Father Olavida's death. His humiliation, and repeated offers of confession, came too late. He was conveyed to the Inquisition. The proceedings of that tribunal are rarely disclosed, but there is a secret report (I cannot answer for its truth) of what he said and suffered there. On his first examination, he said he would relate all he *could*. He was told that was not enough, he must relate all he knew.

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"Why did you testify such horror at the funeral of Father Olavida?"—"Everyone testified horror and grief at the death of that venerable ecclesiastic, who died in the odor of sanctity. Had I done otherwise, it might have been reckoned a proof of my guilt." "Why did you interrupt the preacher with such extraordinary exclamations?"—To this no answer. "Why do you refuse to explain the meaning of those exclamations?"—No answer. "Why do you persist in this obstinate and dangerous silence? Look, I beseech you, brother, at the cross that is suspended against this wall," and the Inquisitor pointed to the large black crucifix at the back of the chair where he sat; "one drop of the blood shed there can purify you from all the sin you have ever committed; but all that blood, combined with the intercession of the Queen of Heaven, and the merits of all

its martyrs, nay, even the absolution of the Pope, cannot deliver you from the curse of dying in unrepented sin."—"What sin, then, have I committed?"—"The greatest of all possible sins; you refuse answering the questions put to you at the tribunal of the most holy and merciful Inquisition;—you will not tell us what you know concerning the death of Father Olavida."—"I have told you that I believe he perished in consequence of his ignorance and presumption." "What proof can you produce of that?"—"He sought the knowledge of a secret withheld from man." "What was that?"—"The secret of discovering the presence or agency of the evil power." "Do you possess that secret?"—After much agitation on the part of the prisoner, he said distinctly, but very faintly, "My master forbids me to disclose it." "If your master were Jesus Christ, he would not forbid you to obey the commands, or answer the questions of the Inquisition."—"I am not sure of that." There was a general outcry of horror at these words. The examination then went on. "If you believed Olavida to be guilty of any pursuits or studies condemned by our mother the church, why did you not denounce him to the Inquisition?"—"Because I believed him not likely to be injured by such pursuits; his mind was too weak,—he died in the struggle," said the prisoner with great emphasis. "You believe, then, it requires strength of mind to keep those abominable secrets, when examined as to their nature and tendency?"—"No, I rather imagine strength of body." "We shall try that presently," said an Inquisitor, giving a signal for the torture.

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The prisoner underwent the first and second applications with unshrinking courage, but on the infliction of the water-torture, which is indeed insupportable to humanity, either to suffer or relate, he exclaimed in the gasping interval, he would disclose everything. He was released, refreshed, restored, and the following day uttered the following remarkable confession. . . .

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The old Spanish woman further confessed to Stanton, that. . . .

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and that the Englishman certainly had been seen in the neighborhood since;—seen, as she had heard, that very night. "Great G—d!" exclaimed Stanton, as he recollected the stranger whose demoniac laugh had so appalled him, while gazing on the lifeless bodies of the lovers, whom the lightning had struck and blasted.

As the manuscript, after a few blotted and illegible pages, became more distinct, Melmoth read on, perplexed and unsatisfied, not knowing what connection this Spanish story could have with his ancestor, whom, however, he recognized under the title of *the Englishman;* and wondering how Stanton could have thought it worth his while to follow him to Ireland, write a long manuscript about an event that occurred in Spain, and leave it in the hands of his family, to "verify untrue things," in the language of Dogberry,—his wonder was diminished, though his curiosity was still more inflamed, by the perusal of the next lines, which he made out with some difficulty. It seems Stanton was now in England.

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About the year 1677, Stanton was in London, his mind still full of his mysterious countryman. This constant subject of his contemplations had produced a visible change in his exterior,—his walk was what Sallust tells us of Catiline's,—his were, too, the "*fœdi oculi.*" He said to himself every moment, "If I could but trace that being, I will not call him man,"—and the next moment he said, "and what if I could?" In this state of mind, it is singular enough that he mixed constantly in public amusements, but it is true. When one fierce passion is devouring the soul, we feel more than ever the necessity of external excitement; and our dependence on the world for temporary relief increases in direct proportion to our contempt of the

world and all its works. He went frequently to the theaters, *then* fashionable, when

> "The fair sat panting at a courtier's play,
> And not a mask went unimproved away."

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It was that memorable night, when, according to the history of the veteran Betterton,[1] Mrs. Barry, who personated Roxana, had a green-room squabble with Mrs. Bowtell, the representative of Statira, about a veil, which the partiality of the property man adjudged to the latter. Roxana suppressed her rage till the fifth act, when, stabbing Statira, she aimed the blow with such force as to pierce through her stays, and inflict a severe though not dangerous wound. Mrs. Bowtell fainted, the performance was suspended, and, in the commotion which this incident caused in the house, many of the audience rose, and Stanton among them. It was at this moment that, in a seat opposite to him, he discovered the object of his search for four years,—the Englishman whom he had met in the plains of Valencia, and whom he believed the same with the subject of the extraordinary narrative he had heard there.

He was standing up. There was nothing particular or remarkable in his appearance, but the expression of his eyes could never be mistaken or forgotten. The heart of Stanton palpitated with violence,—a mist overspread his eye,—a nameless and deadly sickness, accompanied with a creeping sensation in every pore, from which cold drops were gushing, announced the . . . .

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Before he had well recovered, a strain of music, soft, solemn, and delicious, breathed round him, audibly ascending from the ground, and increasing in sweetness and power till it seemed to fill the whole building. Under the sudden impulse of amazement and pleasure, he inquired of some around him from whence those exquisite sounds

[1] Vide Betterton's History of the Stage.

arose. But, by the manner in which he was answered, it was plain that those he addressed considered him insane; and, indeed, the remarkable change in his expression might well justify the suspicion. He then remembered that night in Spain, when the same sweet and mysterious sounds were heard only by the young bridegroom and bride, of whom the latter perished on that very night. "And am I then to be the next victim?" thought Stanton; "and are those celestial sounds, that seem to prepare us for heaven, only intended to announce the presence of an incarnate fiend, who mocks the devoted with 'airs from heaven,' while he prepares to surround them with 'blasts from hell'?" It is very singular that at this moment, when his imagination had reached its highest pitch of elevation,—when the object he had pursued so long and fruitlessly, had in one moment become as it were tangible to the grasp both of mind and body,—when this spirit, with whom he had wrestled in darkness, was at last about to declare its name, that Stanton began to feel a kind of disappointment at the futility of his pursuits, like Bruce at discovering the source of the Nile, or Gibbon on concluding his History. The feeling which he had dwelt on so long, that he had actually converted it into a duty, was after all mere curiosity; but what passion is more insatiable, or more capable of giving a kind of romantic grandeur to all its wanderings and eccentricities? Curiosity is in one respect like love, it always compromises between the object and the feeling; and provided the latter possesses sufficient energy, no matter how contemptible the former may be. A child might have smiled at the agitation of Stanton, caused as it was by the accidental appearance of a stranger; but no man, in the full energy of his passions, was there, but must have trembled at the horrible agony of emotion with which he felt approaching, with sudden and irresistible velocity, the crisis of his destiny.

When the play was over, he stood for some moments in the deserted streets. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and he saw near him a figure, whose shadow, projected

half across the street (there were no flagged ways then, chains and posts were the only defense of the foot passenger), appeared to him of gigantic magnitude. He had been so long accustomed to contend with these phantoms of the imagination, that he took a kind of stubborn delight in subduing them. He walked up to the object, and observing the shadow only was magnified, and the figure was the ordinary height of man, he approached it, and discovered the very object of his search,—the man whom he had seen for a moment in Valencia, and, after a search of four years, recognized at the theater.

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"You were in quest of me?"—"I was." "Have you anything to inquire of me?"—"Much." "Speak, then."—"This is no place." "No place! poor wretch, I am independent of time and place. Speak, if you have anything to ask or to learn."—"I have many things to ask, but nothing to learn, I hope, from you." "You deceive yourself, but you will be undeceived when next we meet."—"And when shall that be?" said Stanton, grasping his arm; "name your hour and your place." "The hour shall be midday," answered the stranger, with a horrid and unintelligible smile; "and the place shall be the bare walls of a madhouse, where you shall rise rattling in your chains, and rustling from your straw, to greet me,—yet still you shall have *the curse of sanity*, and of memory. My voice shall ring in your ears till then, and the glance of these eyes shall be reflected from every object, animate or inanimate, till you behold them again."—"Is it under circumstances so horrible we are to meet again?" said Stanton, shrinking under the full-lighted blaze of those demon eyes. "I never," said the stranger, in an emphatic tone,—"I *never desert my friends in misfortune.* When they are plunged in the lowest abyss of human calamity, *they are sure to be visited by me.*"

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The narrative, when Melmoth was again able to trace its continuation, described Stanton, some years after, plunged in a state the most deplorable.

He had been always reckoned of a singular turn of mind, and the belief of this, aggravated by his constant talk of Melmoth, his wild pursuit of him, his strange behavior at the theater, and his dwelling on the various particulars of their extraordinary meetings, with all the intensity of the deepest conviction (while he never could impress them on any one's conviction but his own), suggested to some prudent people the idea that he was deranged. Their malignity probably took part with their prudence. The selfish Frenchman [1] says, we feel a pleasure even in the misfortunes of our friends,—*à plus forte* in those of our enemies; and as everyone is an enemy to a man of genius of course, the report of Stanton's malady was propagated with infernal and successful industry. Stanton's next relative, a needy unprincipled man, watched the report in its circulation, and saw the snares closing round his victim. He waited on him one morning, accompanied by a person of a grave, though somewhat repulsive appearance. Stanton was as usual abstracted and restless, and, after a few moments' conversation, he proposed a drive a few miles out of London, which he said would revive and refresh him. Stanton objected, on account of the difficulty of getting a hackney coach (for it is singular that at this period the number of private equipages, though infinitely fewer than they are now, exceeded the number of hired ones), and proposed going by water. This, however, did not suit the kinsman's views; and, after pretending to send for a carriage (which was in waiting at the end of the street), Stanton and his companions entered it, and drove about two miles out of London.

The carriage then stopped. Come, Cousin," said the younger Stanton,—" come and view a purchase I have made." Stanton absently alighted, and followed him across a small paved court; the other person followed. " In troth, Cousin," said Stanton, " your choice appears not to have been discreetly made; your house has somewhat of a gloomy aspect."—" Hold you content, Cousin," replied the

[1] Rochefoucauld.

other; "I shall take order that you like it better, when you have been some time a dweller therein." Some attendants of a mean appearance, and with most suspicious visages, awaited them on their entrance, and they ascended a narrow staircase, which led to a room meanly furnished. "Wait here," said the kinsman, to the man who accompanied them, "till I go for company to divertise my cousin in his loneliness." They were left alone. Stanton took no notice of his companion, but as usual seized the first book near him, and began to read. It was a volume in manuscript,—they were then much more common than now.

The first lines struck him as indicating insanity in the writer. It was a wild proposal (written apparently after the great fire of London) to rebuild it with stone, and attempting to prove, on a calculation wild, false, and yet sometimes plausible, that this could be done out of the colossal fragments of Stonehenge, which the writer proposed to remove for that purpose. Subjoined were several grotesque drawings of engines designed to remove those massive blocks, and in a corner of the page was a note,—"I would have drawn these more accurately, but was not allowed *a knife* to mend my pen."

The next was entitled, "A modest proposal for the spreading of Christianity in foreign parts, whereby it is hoped its entertainment will become general all over the world."—This modest proposal was, to convert the Turkish ambassadors (who had been in London a few years before), by offering them their choice of being strangled on the spot, or becoming Christians. Of course the writer reckoned on their embracing the easier alternative, but even this was to be clogged with a heavy condition,—namely, that they must be bound before a magistrate to convert twenty Mussulmans a day, on their return to Turkey. The rest of the pamphlet was reasoned very much in the conclusive style of Captain Bobadil,—these twenty will convert twenty more apiece, and these two hundred converts, converting their due number in the same time, all Turkey would be converted before the Grand Signior knew where

he was. Then comes the *coup d'éclat*,—one fine morning, every minaret in Constantinople was to ring out with bells, instead of the cry of the Muezzins; and the Imaum, coming out to see what was the matter, was to be encountered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, *in pontificalibus*, performing Cathedral service in the church of St. Sophia, which was to finish the business. Here an objection appeared to arise, which the ingenuity of the writer had anticipated.—"It may be redargued," saith he, "by those who have more spleen than brain, that forasmuch as the Archbishop preacheth in English, he will not thereby much edify the Turkish folk, who do altogether hold in a vain gabble of their own." But this (to use his own language) he "evites," by judiciously observing, that where service was performed in an unknown tongue, the devotion of the people was always observed to be much increased thereby; as, for instance, in the church of Rome,—that St. Augustine, with his monks, advanced to meet King Ethelbert singing litanies (in a language his majesty could not possibly have understood), and converted him and his whole court on the spot;—that the sybilline books . . . .

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Cum multis aliis.

Between the pages were cut most exquisitely in paper the likenesses of some of these Turkish ambassadors; the hair of the beards, in particular, was feathered with a delicacy of touch that seemed the work of fairy fingers,—but the pages ended with a complaint of the operator, that his *scissors had been taken from him.* However, he consoled himself and the reader with the assurance, that he would that night catch a moonbeam as it entered through the grating, and, when he had whetted it on the iron knobs of his door, would do wonders with it. In the next page was found a melancholy proof of powerful but prostrated intellect. It contained some insane lines, ascribed to Lee the dramatic poet, commencing,

"O that my lungs could bleat like buttered pease," &c.

There is no proof whatever that these miserable lines were really written by Lee, except that the measure is the fashionable quatrain of the period. It is singular that Stanton read on without suspicion of his own danger, quite absorbed in *the album of a madhouse*, without ever reflecting on the place where he was, and which such compositions too manifestly designated.

It was after a long interval that he looked round, and perceived that his companion was gone. Bells were unusual then. He proceeded to the door,—it was fastened. He called aloud,—his voice was echoed in a moment by many others, but in tones so wild and discordant, that he desisted in involuntary terror. As the day advanced, and no one approached, he tried the window, and then perceived for the first time it was grated. It looked out on the narrow flagged yard, in which no human being was; and if there had, from such a being no human feeling could have been extracted.

Sickening with unspeakable horror, he sunk rather than sat down beside the miserable window, and "wished for day."

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At midnight he started from a doze, half a swoon, half a sleep, which probably the hardness of his seat, and of the deal table on which he leaned, had not contributed to prolong.

He was in complete darkness; the horror of his situation struck him at once, and for a moment he was indeed almost qualified for an inmate of that dreadful mansion. He felt his way to the door, shook it with desperate strength, and uttered the most frightful cries, mixed with expostulations and commands. His cries were in a moment echoed by a hundred voices. In maniacs there is a peculiar malignity, accompanied by an extraordinary acuteness of some of the senses, particularly in distinguishing the voice of a stranger. The cries that he heard on every side seemed like a wild and infernal yell of joy, that their mansion of misery had obtained another tenant.

He paused, exhausted,—a quick and thundering step was

heard in the passage. The door was opened, and a man of savage appearance stood at the entrance,—two more were seen indistinctly in the passage. "Release me, villain!"—"Stop, my fine fellow, what's all this noise for?" "Where am I?" "Where you ought to be." "Will you dare to detain me?"—"Yes, and a little more than that," answered the ruffian, applying a loaded horsewhip to his back and shoulders, till the patient soon fell to the ground convulsed with rage and pain. "Now you see you are where you ought to be," repeated the ruffian, brandishing the horsewhip over him, "and now take the advice of a friend, and make no more noise. The lads are ready for you with the darbies, and they'll clink them on in the crack of this whip, unless you prefer another touch of it first." They then were advancing into the room as he spoke, with fetters in their hands (strait waistcoats being then little known or used), and showed, by their frightful countenances and gestures, no unwillingness to apply them. Their harsh rattle on the stone pavement made Stanton's blood run cold; the effect, however, was useful. He had the presence of mind to acknowledge his (supposed) miserable condition, to supplicate the forbearance of the ruthless keeper, and promise complete submission to his orders. This pacified the ruffian, and he retired.

Stanton collected all his resolution to encounter the horrible night; he saw all that was before him, and summoned himself to meet it. After much agitated deliberation, he conceived it best to continue the same appearance of submission and tranquillity, hoping that thus he might in time either propitiate the wretches in whose hands he was, or, by his apparent inoffensiveness, procure such opportunities of indulgence, as might perhaps ultimately facilitate his escape. He therefore determined to conduct himself with the utmost tranquillity, and never to let his voice be heard in the house; and he laid down several other resolutions with a degree of prudence which he already shuddered to think might be the cunning of incipient madness, or the beginning result of the horrid habits of the place.

These resolutions were put to desperate trial that very night. Just next to Stanton's apartment were lodged two most uncongenial neighbors. One of them was a puritanical weaver, who had been driven mad by a single sermon from the celebrated Hugh Peters, and was sent to the madhouse as full of election and reprobation as he could hold,—and fuller. He regularly repeated over the *five points* while daylight lasted, and imagined himself preaching in a conventicle with distinguished success; toward twilight his visions were more gloomy, and at midnight his blasphemies became horrible. In the opposite cell was lodged a loyalist tailor, who had been ruined by giving credit to the cavaliers and their ladies,—(for at this time, and much later, down to the reign of Anne, tailors were employed by females even *to make* and *fit on their stays*),—who had run mad with drink and loyalty on the burning of the Rump, and ever since had made the cells of the madhouse echo with fragments of the ill-fated Colonel Lovelace's song, scraps from Cowley's "Cutter of Coleman street," and some curious specimens from Mrs. Aphra Behn's plays, where the cavaliers are denominated the *heroicks*, and Lady Lambert and Lady Desborough represented as going to meeting, their large Bibles carried before them by their pages, and falling in love with two banished cavaliers by the way. The voice in which he shrieked out such words was powerfully horrible, but it was like the moan of an infant compared to the voice which took up and reëchoed the cry, in a tone that made the building shake. It was the voice of a maniac, who had lost her husband, children, subsistence, and finally her reason, in the dreadful fire of London. The cry of fire never failed to operate with terrible punctuality on her associations. She had been in a disturbed sleep, and now started from it as suddenly as on that dreadful night. It was Saturday night too, and she was always observed to be particularly violent on that night,—it was the terrible weekly festival of insanity with her. She was awake, and busy in a moment escaping from the flames; and she dramatized the whole scene with such hideous fidelity, that Stanton's resolution was far more

in danger from her than from the battle between his neighbors *Testimony* and *Hothead.* She began exclaiming she was suffocated by the smoke; then she sprung from her bed, calling for a light, and appeared to be struck by the sudden glare that burst through her casement.—"The last day," she shrieked, "The last day! The very heavens are on fire!"—"That will not come till the Man of Sin be first destroyed," cried the weaver; "thou ravest of light and fire, and yet thou art in utter darkness.—I pity thee, poor mad soul, I pity thee!" The maniac never heeded him; she appeared to be scrambling up a staircase to her children's room. She exclaimed she was scorched, singed, suffocated; her courage appeared to fail, and she retreated. "But my children are there!" she cried in a voice of unspeakable agony, as she seemed to make another effort; "here I am—here I am come to save you.—Oh God! They are all blazing!—Take this arm—no, not that, it is scorched and disabled—well, any arm—take hold of my clothes—no, they are blazing too!—Well, take me all on fire as I am!—And their hair, how it hisses!—Water, one drop of water for my youngest—he is but an infant—for my youngest, and let me burn!" She paused in horrid silence, to watch the fall of a blazing rafter that was about to shatter the staircase on which she stood.—"The roof has fallen on my head!" she exclaimed. "The earth is weak, and all the inhabitants thereof," chanted the weaver; "I bear up the pillars of it."

The maniac marked the destruction of the spot where she thought she stood by one desperate bound, accompanied by a wild shriek, and then calmly gazed on her infants as they rolled over the scorching fragments, and sunk into the abyss of fire below. "There they go,—one—two—three—all!" and her voice sunk into low mutterings, and her convulsions into faint, cold shudderings, like the sobbings of a spent storm, as she imagined herself to "stand in safety and despair," amid the thousand houseless wretches assembled in the suburbs of London on the dreadful nights after the fire, without food, roof, or raiment, all gazing on the

burning ruins of their dwellings and their property. She seemed to listen to their complaints, and even repeated some of them very affectingly, but invariably answered them with the same words, "But I have lost all my children—*all!*" It was remarkable, that when this sufferer began to rave, all the others became silent. The cry of nature hushed every other cry,—she was the only patient in the house who was not mad from politics, religion, ebriety, or some perverted passion; and terrifying as the outbreak of her frenzy always was, Stanton used to await it as a kind of relief from the dissonant, melancholy, and ludicrous ravings of the others.

But the utmost efforts of his resolution began to sink under the continued horrors of the place. The impression on his senses began to defy the power of reason to resist them. He could not shut out these frightful cries nightly repeated, nor the frightful sound of the whip employed to still them. Hope began to fail him, as he observed, that the submissive tranquillity (which he had imagined, by obtaining increased indulgence, might contribute to his escape, or perhaps convince the keeper of his sanity) was interpreted by the callous ruffian, who was acquainted only with the varieties of *madness*, as a more refined species of that cunning which he was well accustomed to watch and baffle.

On his first discovery of his situation, he had determined to take the utmost care of his health and intellect that the place allowed, as the sole basis of his hope of deliverance. But as that hope declined, he neglected the means of realizing it. He had at first risen early, walked incessantly about his cell, and availed himself of every opportunity of being in the open air. He took the strictest care of his person in point of cleanliness, and with or without appetite, regularly forced down his miserable meals; and all these efforts were even pleasant, as long as hope prompted them. But now he began to relax them all. He passed half the day in his wretched bed, in which he frequently took his meals, declined shaving or changing his linen, and, when the sun shone into his cell, he turned from it on his straw with a

sigh of heartbroken despondency. Formerly, when the air breathed through his grating, he used to say, "Blessed air of heaven, I shall breathe you once more in freedom!—Reserve all your freshness for that delicious evening when I shall inhale you, and be as free as you myself." Now when he felt it, he sighed and said nothing. The twitter of the sparrows, the pattering of rain, or the moan of the wind, sounds that he used to sit up in his bed to catch with delight, as reminding him of nature, were now unheeded.

He began at times to listen with sullen and horrible pleasure to the cries of his miserable companions. He became squalid, listless, torpid, and disgusting in his appearance.

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It was one of those dismal nights, that, as he tossed on his loathsome bed,—more loathsome from the impossibility to quit it without feeling more "unrest,"—he perceived the miserable light that burned in the hearth was obscured by the intervention of some dark object. He turned feebly toward the light, without curiosity, without excitement, but with a wish to diversify the monotony of his misery, by observing the slightest change made even accidentally in the dusky atmosphere of his cell. Between him and the light stood the figure of Melmoth, just as he had seen him from the first; the figure was the same; the expression of the face was the same,—cold, stony, and rigid; the eyes, with their infernal and dazzling luster, were still the same.

Stanton's ruling passion rushed on his soul; he felt this apparition like a summons to a high and fearful encounter. He heard his heart beat audibly, and could have exclaimed with Lee's unfortunate heroine,—"It pants as cowards do before a battle; Oh the great march has sounded!"

Melmoth approached him with that frightful calmness that mocks the terror it excites. "My prophecy has been fulfilled;—you rise to meet me rattling from your chains, and rustling from your straw—am I not a true prophet?" Stanton was silent. "Is not your situation very miserable?"—Still Stanton was silent; for he was beginning to

believe this an illusion of madness. He thought to himself, "How could he have gained entrance here?"—"Would you not wish to be delivered from it?" Stanton tossed on his straw, and its rustling seemed to answer the question. "I have the power to deliver you from it." Melmoth spoke very slowly and very softly, and the melodious smoothness of his voice made a frightful contrast to the stony rigor of his features, and the fiendlike brilliancy of his eyes. "Who are you, and whence come you?" said Stanton, in a tone that was meant to be interrogatory and imperative, but which, from his habits of squalid debility, was at once feeble and querulous. His intellect had become affected by the gloom of his miserable habitation, as the wretched inmate of a similar mansion, when produced before a medical examiner, was reported to be a complete Albino.—His skin was bleached, his eyes turned white; he could not bear the light; and, when exposed to it, he turned away with a mixture of weakness and restlessness, more like the writhings of a sick infant than the struggles of a man.

Such was Stanton's situation. He was enfeebled now, and the power of the enemy seemed without a possibility of opposition from either his intellectual or corporeal powers.

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Of all their horrible dialogue, only these words were legible in the manuscript, "You know me now."—"I always knew you."—"That is false; you imagined you did, and that has been the cause of all the wild .
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. . of your finally being lodged in this mansion of misery, where only I would seek, where only I can succor you."—"You, demon!"——"Demon!——Harsh words!—Was it a demon or a human being placed you here?—Listen to me, Stanton; nay, wrap not yourself in that miserable blanket,—that cannot shut out my words. Believe me, were you folded in thunder clouds, you must hear *me!* Stanton, think of your misery. These bare walls —what do they present to the intellect or to the senses?—

Whitewash, diversified with the scrawls of charcoal or red chalk, that your happy predecessors have left for you to trace over. You have a taste for drawing—I trust it will improve. And here's a grating, through which the sun squints on you like a stepdame, and the breeze blows, as if it meant to tantalize you with a sigh from that sweet mouth, whose kiss you must never enjoy. And where's your library,—intellectual man,—traveled man?" he repeated in a tone of bitter derision; "where be your companions, your peaked men of countries, as your favorite Shakespeare has it? You must be content with the spider and the rat, to crawl and scratch round your flock bed! I have known prisoners in the Bastille to feed them for companions,—why don't you begin your task? I have known a spider to descend at the tap of a finger, and a rat to come forth when the daily meal was brought, to share it with his fellow prisoner!—How delightful to have vermin for your guests! Aye, and when the feast fails them, they make a meal of their entertainer!—You shudder.—Are you, then, the first prisoner who has been devoured alive by the vermin that infested his cell?—Delightful banquet, not 'where you eat, but where you are eaten'! Your guests, however, will give you one token of repentance while they feed; there will be *gnashing of teeth*, and you shall hear it, and feel it too perchance!—And then for meals—Oh you are daintily off!—The soup that the cat has lapped; and (as her progeny has probably contributed to the hell broth) why not?——Then your hours of solitude, deliciously diversified by the yell of famine, the howl of madness, the crash of whips, and the broken-hearted sob of those who, like you, are supposed, or *driven* mad by the crimes of others!—Stanton, do you imagine your reason can possibly hold out amid such scenes?—Supposing your reason was unimpaired, your health not destroyed,—suppose all this, which is, after all, more than fair supposition can grant, guess the effect of the continuance of these scenes on your senses alone. A time will come, and soon, when, from mere habit, you will echo the scream of every delirious

wretch that harbors near you; then you will pause, clasp your hands on your throbbing head, and listen with horrible anxiety whether the scream proceeded from *you* or *them*. The time will come, when, from the want of occupation, the listless and horrible vacancy of your hours, you will feel as anxious to hear those shrieks, as you were at first terrified to hear them,—when you will watch for the ravings of your next neighbor, as you would for a scene on the stage. All humanity will be extinguished in you. The ravings of these wretches will become at once your sport and your torture. You will watch for the sounds, to mock them with the grimaces and bellowings of a fiend. The mind has a power of accommodating itself to its situation, that you will experience in its most frightful and deplorable efficacy. Then comes the dreadful doubt of one's own sanity, the terrible announcer that *that* doubt will soon become fear, and *that* fear certainty. Perhaps (still more dreadful) the *fear* will at last become a *hope*,—shut out from society, watched by a brutal keeper, writhing with all the impotent agony of an incarcerated mind, without communication and without sympathy, unable to exchange ideas but with those whose ideas are only the hideous specters of departed intellect, or even to hear the welcome sound of the human voice, except to mistake it for the howl of a fiend, and stop the ear desecrated by its intrusion,—then at last your fear will become a more fearful hope; you will wish to become one of them, to escape the agony of consciousness. As those who have long leaned over a precipice, have at last felt a desire to plunge below, to relieve the intolerable temptation of their giddiness,[1] you will hear them laugh amid their wildest paroxysms; you will say, 'Doubtless those wretches have some consolation, but I have none; my sanity is my greatest curse in this abode of horrors. They greedily devour their miserable meals, while I loathe mine. They sleep sometimes soundly, while my

[1] A fact, related to me by a person who was near committing suicide in a similar situation, to escape what he called "the excruciating torture of giddiness."

sleep is—worse than their waking. They are revived every morning by some delicious illusion of cunning madness, soothing them with the hope of escaping, baffling or tormenting their keeper; my sanity precludes all such hope. *I know I never can escape,* and the preservation of my faculties is only an aggravation of my sufferings. I have all their miseries,—I have none of their consolations. They laugh,—I hear them; would I could laugh like them.' You will try, and the very effort will be an invocation to the demon of insanity to come and take full possession of you from that moment forever."

(There were other details, both of the menaces and temptations employed by Melmoth, which are too horrible for insertion. One of them may serve for an instance.)

"You think that the intellectual power is something distinct from the vitality of the soul, or, in other words, that if even your reason should be destroyed (which it nearly is), your soul might yet enjoy beatitude in the full exercise of its enlarged and exalted faculties, and all the clouds which obscured them be dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness, in whose beams you hope to bask forever and ever. Now, without going into any metaphysical subtleties about the distinction between mind and soul, experience must teach you, that there can be no crime into which madmen would not, and do not, precipitate themselves; mischief is their occupation, malice their habit, murder their sport, and blasphemy their delight. Whether a soul in this state can be in a hopeful one, it is for you to judge; but it seems to me, that with the loss of reason (and reason cannot long be retained in this place) you lose also the hope of immortality.—Listen," said the tempter, pausing, "listen to the wretch who is raving near you, and whose blasphemies might make a demon start.—He was once an eminent puritanical preacher. Half the day he imagines himself in a pulpit, denouncing damnation against Papists, Arminians, and even Sublapsarians (he being a Supra-lapsarian himself). He foams, he writhes, he gnashes his teeth; you would imagine him in the hell he was painting, and that

the fire and brimstone he is so lavish of were actually exhaling from his jaws. At night his *creed retaliates on him;* he believes himself one of the reprobates he has been all day denouncing, and curses God for the very decree he has all day been glorifying Him for.

"He, whom he has for twelve hours been vociferating 'is the loveliest among ten thousand,' becomes the object of demoniac hostility and execration. He grapples with the iron posts of his bed, and says he is rooting out the cross from the very foundations of Calvary; and it is remarkable, that in proportion as his morning exercises are intense, vivid, and eloquent, his nightly blasphemies are outrageous and horrible.—Hark! Now he believes himself a demon; listen to his diabolical eloquence of horror!"

Stanton listened, and shuddered . . .

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"Escape—escape for your life," cried the tempter; "break forth into life, liberty, and sanity. Your social happiness, your intellectual powers, your immortal interests, perhaps, depend on the choice of this moment.—There is the door, and the key is in my hand.—Choose—choose!"—"And how comes the key in your hand? and what is the condition of my liberation?" said Stanton.

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The explanation occupied several pages, which, to the torture of young Melmoth, were wholly illegible. It seemed, however, to have been rejected by Stanton with the utmost rage and horror, for Melmoth at last made out, —"Begone, monster, demon!—begone to your native place. Even this mansion of horror trembles to contain you; its walls sweat, and its floors quiver, while you tread them."

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The conclusion of this extraordinary manuscript was in such a state, that, in fifteen moldy and crumbling pages, Melmoth could hardly make out that number of lines. No antiquarian, unfolding with trembling hand the calcined leaves of an Herculaneum manuscript, and hoping to dis-

cover some lost lines of the Æneis in Virgil's own autograph, or at least some unutterable abomination of Petronius or Martial, happily elucidatory of the mysteries of the Spintriæ, or the orgies of the Phallic worshipers, ever pored with more luckless diligence, or shook a head of more hopeless despondency over his task. He could but just make out what tended rather to excite than assuage that feverish thirst of curiosity which was consuming his inmost soul. The manuscript told no more of Melmoth, but mentioned that Stanton was finally liberated from his confinement,—that his pursuit of Melmoth was incessant and indefatigable,—that he himself allowed it to be a species of insanity,—that while he acknowledged it to be the master passion, he also felt it the master torment of his life. He again visited the Continent, returned to England,—pursued, inquired, traced, bribed, but in vain. The being whom he had met thrice, under circumstances so extraordinary, he was fated never to encounter again *in his lifetime*. At length, discovering that he had been born in Ireland, he resolved to go there,—went, and found his pursuit again fruitless, and his inquiries unanswered. The family knew nothing of him, or at least what they knew or imagined, they prudently refused to disclose to a stranger, and Stanton departed unsatisfied. It is remarkable, that he too, as appeared from many half-obliterated pages of the manuscript, never disclosed to mortal the particulars of their conversation in the madhouse; and the slightest allusion to it threw him into fits of rage and gloom equally singular and alarming. He left the manuscript, however, in the hands of the family, possibly deeming, from their incuriosity, their apparent indifference to their relative, or their obvious unacquaintance with reading of any kind, manuscript or books, his deposit would be safe. He seems, in fact, to have acted like men, who, in distress at sea, intrust their letters and dispatches to a bottle sealed, and commit it to the waves. The last lines of the manuscript that were legible, were sufficiently extraordinary . . . .

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"I have sought him everywhere.—The desire of meeting him once more is become as a burning fire within me,—it is the necessary condition of my existence. I have vainly sought him at last in Ireland, of which I find he is a native.—Perhaps our final meeting will be in . . . .

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Such was the conclusion of the manuscript which Melmoth found in his uncle's closet. When he had finished it, he sunk down on the table near which he had been reading it, his face hid in his folded arms, his senses reeling, his mind in a mingled state of stupor and excitement. After a few moments, he raised himself with an involuntary start, and saw the picture gazing at him from its canvas. He was within ten inches of it as he sat, and the proximity appeared increased by the strong light that was accidentally thrown on it, and its being the only representation of a human figure in the room. Melmoth felt for a moment as if he were about to receive an explanation from its lips.

He gazed on it in return,—all was silent in the house,—they were alone together. The illusion subsided at length; and as the mind rapidly passes to opposite extremes, he remembered the injunction of his uncle to destroy the portrait. He seized it;—his hand shook at first, but the moldering canvas appeared to assist him in the effort. He tore it from the frame with a cry half terrific, half triumphant,—it fell at his feet, and he shuddered as it fell. He expected to hear some fearful sounds, some unimaginable breathings of prophetic horror, follow this act of sacrilege, for such he felt it, to tear the portrait of his ancestor from his native walls. He paused and listened:—"There was no voice, nor any that answered;"—but as the wrinkled and torn canvas fell to the floor, its undulations gave the portrait the appearance of smiling. Melmoth felt horror indescribable at this transient and imaginary resuscitation of the figure. He caught it up, rushed into the next room, tore, cut, and hacked it in every direction, and eagerly watched the fragments that burned like tinder in the turf fire which had been lit in his room. As Melmoth saw the last blaze,

he threw himself into bed, in hope of a deep and intense sleep. He had done what was required of him, and felt exhausted both in mind and body; but his slumber was not so sound as he had hoped for. The sullen light of the turf fire, burning but never blazing, disturbed him every moment. He turned and turned, but still there was the same red light glaring on, but not illuminating, the dusky furniture of the apartment. The wind was high that night, and as the creaking door swung on its hinges, every noise seemed like the sound of a hand struggling with the lock, or of a foot pausing on the threshold. But (for Melmoth never could decide) was it in a dream or not, that he saw the figure of his ancestor appear at the door?—hesitatingly as he saw him at first on the night of his uncle's death,—saw him enter the room, approach his bed, and heard him whisper, "You have burned me, then; but those are flames I can survive.—I am alive,—I am beside you." Melmoth started, sprung from his bed,—it was broad daylight. He looked round,—there was no human being in the room but himself. He felt a slight pain in the wrist of his right arm. He looked at it, it was black and blue, as from the recent gripe of a strong hand.

Balzac's tale, Melmoth Reconciled, in Vol. IV., furnishes a solution to the terrible problem which Maturin has stated in this story.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

Introduction to "A Mystery with a Moral"

The next Mystery Story is like no other in these volumes. The editor's defense lies in the plea that Laurence Sterne is not like other writers of English. He is certainly one of the very greatest. Yet nowadays he is generally unknown. His rollicking frankness, his audacious unconventionality, are enough to account for the neglect. Even the easy mannered England of 1760 opened its eyes in horror when "Tristram Shandy" appeared. "A most unclerical clergyman," the public pronounced the rector of Sutton and prebendary of York.

Besides, his style was rambling to the last degree. Plot concerned him least of all authors of fiction.

For instance, it is more than doubtful that the whimsical parson really *intended* a moral to be read into the adventures of his "Sentimental Journey" that follow in these pages. He used to declare that he never intended anything—he never knew whither his pen was leading—the rash implement, once in hand, was likely to fly with him from Yorkshire to Italy—or to Paris—or across the road to Uncle Toby's; and what could the helpless author do but improve each occasion?

So here is one such "occasion" thus "improved" by disjointed sequels—heedless, one would say, and yet glittering with the unreturnable thrust of subtle wit, or softening with simple emotion, like a thousand immortal passages of this random philosopher.

Even the slightest turns of Sterne's pen bear inspiration. No less a critic than the severe Hazlitt was satisfied that "his works consist only of brilliant passages."

And because the editors of the present volumes found added to "The Mystery" not only a "Solution" but an "Application" of worldly wisdom, and a "Contrast" in Sterne's best vein of quiet happiness—they have felt emboldened to ascribe the passage "A Mystery with a Moral."

As regards the "Application": Sterne knew whereof he wrote. He sought the South of France for health in 1762, and was run after and fêted by the most brilliant circles of Parisian *litterateurs*. This foreign sojourn failed to cure his lung complaint, but suggested the idea to him of the rambling and charming "Sentimental Journey." Only three weeks after its publication, on March 18, 1768, Sterne died alone in his London lodgings.

Spite of all that marred his genius, his work has lived and will live, if only for the exquisite literary art which ever made great things out of little.—THE EDITOR.

Laurence Sterne

A Mystery with a Moral

Parisian Experience of Parson Yorick, on his "Sentimental Journey"

A RIDDLE

I REMAINED at the gate of the hotel for some time, looking at everyone who passed by, and forming conjectures upon them, till my attention got fixed upon a single object, which confounded all kind of reasoning upon him.

It was a tall figure of a philosophic, serious adult look, which passed and repassed sedately along the street, making a turn of about sixty paces on each side of the gate of the hotel. The man was about fifty-two, had a small cane under his arm, was dressed in a dark drab-colored coat, waistcoat, and breeches, which seemed to have seen some years' service. They were still clean, and there was a little air of frugal *propriété* throughout him. By his pulling off his hat, and his attitude of accosting a good many in his way, I saw he was asking charity; so I got a sous or two out of my pocket, ready to give him as he took me in his turn. He passed by me without asking anything, and yet he did not go five steps farther before he asked charity of a little woman. I was much more likely to have given of the two. He had scarce done with the woman, when he pulled his hat off to another who was coming the same way. An ancient gentleman came slowly, and after him a young smart one. He let them both pass and asked nothing. I stood observing him half an hour, in which time he had made a dozen turns backward and forward, and found that he invariably pursued the same plan.

There were two things very singular in this which set my brain to work, and to no purpose; the first was, why the man should only tell his story to the sex; and secondly, what kind of a story it was and what species of eloquence it could be which softened the hearts of the women which he knew it was to no purpose to practice upon the men.

There were two other circumstances which entangled this mystery. The one was, he told every woman what he had to say in her ear, and in a way which had much more the air of a secret than a petition; the other was, it was always successful—he never stopped a woman but she pulled out her purse and immediately gave him something.

I could form no system to explain the phenomenon.

I had got a riddle to amuse me for the rest of the evening, so I walked upstairs to my chamber.

OVERHEARD

The man who either disdains or fears to walk up a dark entry may be an excellent, good man, and fit for a hundred things, but he will not do to make a sentimental traveler. I count little of the many things I see pass at broad noonday, in large and open streets; Nature is shy, and hates to act before spectators; but in such an unobservable corner you sometimes see a single short scene of hers worth all the sentiments of a dozen French plays compounded together; and yet they are *absolutely* fine, and whenever I have a more brilliant affair upon my hands than common, as they suit a preacher just as well as a hero, I generally make my sermon out of them, and for the text, "Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia," is as good as anyone in the Bible.

There is a long, dark passage issuing out from the *Opera Comique* into a narrow street. It is trod by a few who humbly wait for a *fiacre*[1] or wish to get off quietly o' foot when the opera is done. At the end of it, toward the theater,

[1] Hackney coach.

'tis lighted by a small candle, the light of which is almost lost before you get halfway down, but near the door—it is more for ornament than use—you see it as a fixed star of the least magnitude; it burns, but does little good to the world that we know of.

In returning [from the opera] along this passage, I discerned, as I approached within five or six paces of the door, two ladies standing arm in arm with their backs against the wall, waiting, as I imagined, for a *fiacre*. As they were next the door, I thought they had a prior right, so I edged myself up within a yard or little more of them, and quietly took my stand. I was in black and scarce seen.

The lady next me was a tall, lean figure of a woman of about thirty-six; the other, of the same size and make of about forty. There was no mark of wife or widow in any one part of either of them. They seemed to be two upright vestal sisters, unsapped by caresses, unbroke in upon by tender salutations. I could have wished to have made them happy. Their happiness was destined, that night, to come from another quarter.

A low voice with a good turn of expression and sweet cadence at the end of it, begged for a twelve-sous piece between them for the love of heaven. I thought it singular that a beggar should fix the quota of an alms, and that the sum should be twelve times as much as what is usually given in the dark. They both seemed astonished at it as much as myself. "Twelve sous," said one. "A twelve-sous piece," said the other, and made no reply.

The poor man said he knew not how to ask less of ladies of their rank, and bowed down his head to the ground.

"Pooh!" said they, "we have no money."

The beggar remained silent for a moment or two, and renewed his supplication.

"Do not, my fair young ladies," said he, "stop your good ears against me."

"Upon my word, honest man," said the younger, "we have no change."

"Then God bless you," said the poor man, "and multiply

those joys which you can give to others without change."

I observed the older sister put her hand into her pocket. "I will see," said she, "if I have a sous."

"A sous! Give twelve," said the suppliant. "Nature has been bountiful to you; be bountiful to a poor man."

"I would, friend, with all my heart," said the younger, "if I had it."

"My fair charitable," said he, addressing himself to the elder, "what is it but your goodness and humanity which make your bright eyes so sweet that they outshine the morning even in this dark passage? And what was it which made the Marquis de Santerre and his brother say so much of you both, as they just passed by?"

The two ladies seemed much affected, and impulsively at the same time they put their hands into their pockets and each took out a twelve-sous piece.

The contest between them and the poor suppliant was no more. It was continued between themselves which of the two should give the twelve-sous piece in charity, and, to end the dispute, they both gave it together, and the man went away.

SOLUTION

I STEPPED hastily after him; it was the very man whose success in asking charity of the woman before the door of the hotel had so puzzled me, and I found at once his secret, or at least the basis of it: it was flattery.

Delicious essence! how refreshing art thou to Nature! How strongly are all its powers and all its weaknesses on thy side! How sweetly dost thou mix with the blood, and help it through the most difficult and tortuous passages to the heart!

The poor man, as he was not straitened for time, had given it here in a larger dose. It is certain he had a way of bringing it into less form for the many sudden causes he had to do with in the streets; but how he contrived to

correct, sweeten, concenter, and qualify it—I vex not my spirit with the inquiry. It is enough, the beggar gained two twelve-sous pieces, and they can best tell the rest who have gained much greater matters by it.

APPLICATION

We get forward in the world not so much by doing services as receiving them. You take a withering twig and put it in the ground, and then you water it because you have planted it.

Monsieur le Comte de B——, merely because he had done me one kindness in the affair of my passport, would go on and do me another the few days he was at Paris, in making me known to a few people of rank; and they were to present me to others, and so on.

I had got master of my *secret* just in time to turn these honors to some little account; otherwise, as is commonly the case, I should have dined or supped a single time or two round, and then by *translating* French looks and attitudes into plain English, I should presently have seen that I had got hold of the *couvert* [1] of some more entertaining guest; and in course of time should have resigned all my places one after another, merely upon the principle that I could not keep them. As it was, things did not go much amiss.

I had the honor of being introduced to the old Marquis de B——. In days of yore he had signalized himself by some small feats of chivalry in the *Cour d'Amour*, and had dressed himself out to the idea of tilts and tournaments ever since. The Marquis de B—— wished to have it thought the affair was somewhere else than in his brain. "He could like to take a trip to England," and asked much of the English ladies. "Stay where you are, I beseech you, Monsieur le Marquis," said I. "Les Messieurs Anglais can scarce get a kind look from them as it is." The marquis invited me to supper.

[1] Plate, napkin, knife, fork, and spoon.

M. P——, the farmer-general, was just as inquisitive about our taxes. They were very considerable, he heard. "If we knew but how to collect them," said I, making him a low bow.

I could never have been invited to M. P——'s concerts upon any other terms.

I had been misrepresented to Mme. de Q—— as an *esprit* —Mme. de Q—— was an *esprit* herself; she burned with impatience to see me and hear me talk. I had not taken my seat before I saw she did not care a sou whether I had any wit or no. I was let in to be convinced she had. I call Heaven to witness I never once opened the door of my lips.

Mme. de V—— vowed to every creature she met, "She had never had a more improving conversation with a man in her life."

There are three epochs in the empire of a Frenchwoman —she is coquette, then deist, then *dévote*. The empire during these is never lost—she only changes her subjects. When thirty-five years and more have unpeopled her dominion of the slaves of love she repeoples it with slaves of infidelity, and then with the slaves of the church.

Mme. de V—— was vibrating between the first of these epochs; the color of the rose was fading fast away; she ought to have been a deist five years before the time I had the honor to pay my first visit.

She placed me upon the same sofa with her for the sake of disputing the point of religion more closely. In short, Mme. de V—— told me she believed nothing.

I told Mme. de V—— it might be her principle, but I was sure it could not be her interest, to level the outworks, without which I could not conceive how such a citadel as hers could be defended; that there was not a more dangerous thing in the world than for a beauty to be a deist; that it was a debt I owed my creed not to conceal it from her; that I had not been five minutes upon the sofa beside her before I had begun to form designs; and what is it but the sentiments of religion, and the persuasion they had existed

in her breast, which could have checked them as they rose up?

"We are not adamant," said I, taking hold of her hand, "and there is need of all restraints till age in her own time steals in and lays them on us; but, my dear lady," said I, kissing her hand, "it is too—too soon."

I declare I had the credit all over Paris of unperverting Mme. de V——. She affirmed to M. D—— and the Abbé M—— that in one half hour I had said more for revealed religion than all their encyclopædia had said against it. I was listed directly into Mme. de V——o's coterie, and she put off the epoch of deism for two years.

I remember it was in this coterie, in the middle of a discourse, in which I was showing the necessity of a *first cause*, that the young Count de Fainéant took me by the hand to the farthest corner of the room, to tell me that my solitaire was pinned too strait about my neck. "It should be *plus badinant*," said the count, looking down upon his own; "but a word, M. Yorick, to the wise——"

"And from the wise, M. le Comte," replied I, making him a bow, "is enough."

The Count de Fainéant embraced me with more ardor than ever I was embraced by mortal man.

For three weeks together I was of every man's opinion I met. "Pardi! ce M. Yorick a autant d'esprit que nous autres."

"Il raisonne bien," said another.

"C'est un bon enfant," said a third.

And at this price I could have eaten and drunk and been merry all the days of my life at Paris; but it was a dishonest reckoning. I grew ashamed of it; it was the gain of a slave; every sentiment of honor revolted against it; the higher I got, the more was I forced upon my beggarly system; the better the coterie, the more children of Art, I languished for those of Nature. And one night, after a most vile prostitution of myself to half a dozen different people, I grew sick, went to bed, and ordered horses in the morning to set out for Italy.

CONTRAST

A SHOE coming loose from the forefoot of the thill horse at the beginning of the ascent of Mount Taurira, the postilion dismounted, twisted the shoe off, and put it in his pocket; as the ascent was of five or six miles, and that horse our main dependence, I made a point of having the shoe fastened on again as well as we could, but the postilion had thrown away the nails, and the hammer in the chaise box being of no great use without them, I submitted to go on.

He had not mounted half a mile higher when, coming to a flinty piece of road, the poor devil lost a second shoe, and from off his other forefoot. I then got out of the chaise in good earnest, and seeing a house about a quarter of a mile to the left hand, with a great deal to do I prevailed upon the postilion to turn up to it. The look of the house, and of everything about it, as we drew nearer, soon reconciled me to the disaster. It was a little farmhouse, surrounded with about twenty acres of vineyard, about as much corn, and close to the house on one side was a *potagerie* of an acre and a half, full of everything which could make plenty in a French peasant's house, and on the other side was a little wood which furnished wherewithal to dress it. It was about eight in the evening when I got to the house, so I left the postilion to manage his point as he could, and for mine I walked directly into the house.

The family consisted of an old gray-headed man and his wife, with five or six sons and sons-in-laws, and their several wives, and a joyous genealogy out of them.

They were all sitting down together to their lentil soup. A large wheaten loaf was in the middle of the table, and a flagon of wine at each end of it promised joy through the stages of the repast—'twas a feast of love.

The old man rose up to meet me, and with a respectful cordiality would have me sit down at the table. My heart was sat down the moment I entered the room, so I sat down

at once like a son of the family, and to invest myself in the character as speedily as I could, I instantly borrowed the old man's knife, and taking up the loaf cut myself a hearty luncheon; and, as I did it, I saw a testimony in every eye, not only of an honest welcome, but of a welcome mixed with thanks that I had not seemed to doubt it.

Was it this, or tell me, Nature, what else it was that made this morsel so sweet, and to what magic I owe it that the draught I took of their flagon was so delicious with it that they remain upon my palate to this hour?

If the supper was to my taste, the grace which followed it was much more so.

When supper was over, the old man gave a knock upon the table with the haft of his knife to bid them prepare for the dance. The moment the signal was given, the women and girls ran all together into a back apartment to tie up their hair, and the young men to the door to wash their faces and change their sabots, and in three minutes every soul was ready upon a little esplanade before the house to begin. The old man and his wife came out last, and, placing me betwixt them, sat down upon a sofa of turf by the door.

The old man had some fifty years ago been no mean performer upon the *vielle*,[1] and at the age he was then of, touched well enough for the purpose. His wife sung now and then a little to the tune, then intermitted, and joined her old man again, as their children and grandchildren danced before them.

It was not till the middle of the second dance when, from some pauses in the movement wherein they all seemed to look up, I fancied I could distinguish an elevation of spirit different from that which is the cause or the effect of simple jollity. In a word, I thought I beheld *Religion* mixing in the dance; but, as I had never seen her so engaged, I should have looked upon it now as one of the illusions of an imagination, which is eternally misleading me, had not the

[1] A small violin, such as was used by the wandering *jongleurs* of the Middle Ages.—EDITOR.

old man, as soon as the dance ended, said that this was their constant way, and that all his life long he had made it a rule, after supper was over, to call out his family to dance and rejoice, believing, he said, that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay——

"Or a learned prelate either," said I.

When you have gained the top of Mount Taurira, you run presently down to Lyons. Adieu then to all rapid movements! It is a journey of caution, and it fares better with sentiments not to be in a hurry with them, so I contracted with a volturin to take his time with a couple of mules and convey me in my own chaise safe to Turin through Savoy.

Poor, patient, quiet, honest people, fear not! Your poverty, the treasury of your simple virtues, will not be envied you by the world, nor will your values be invaded by it. Nature, in the midst of thy disorders, thou art still friendly to the scantiness thou hast created; with all thy great works about thee little hast thou left to give, either to the scythe or to the sickle, but to that little thou grantest safety and protection, and sweet are the dwellings which stand so sheltered!

William Makepeace Thackeray

On Being Found Out

AT the close (let us say) of Queen Anne's reign, when I was a boy at a private and preparatory school for young gentlemen, I remember the wiseacre of a master ordering us all, one night, to march into a little garden at the back of the house, and thence to proceed one by one into a tool or hen house (I was but a tender little thing just put into short clothes, and can't exactly say whether the house was for tools or hens), and in that house to put our hands into a sack which stood on a bench, a candle burning beside it. I put my hand into the sack. My hand came out quite black. I went and joined the other boys in the schoolroom; and all their hands were black too.

By reason of my tender age (and there are some critics who, I hope, will be satisfied by my acknowledging that I am a hundred and fifty-six next birthday) I could not understand what was the meaning of this night excursion—this candle, this tool house, this bag of soot. I think we little boys were taken out of our sleep to be brought to the ordeal. We came, then, and showed our little hands to the master; washed them or not—most probably, I should say, not—and so went bewildered back to bed.

Something had been stolen in the school that day; and Mr. Wiseacre having read in a book of an ingenious method of finding out a thief by making him put his hand into a sack (which, if guilty, the rogue would shirk from doing), all we boys were subjected to the trial. Goodness knows what the lost object was, or who stole it. We all had black hands to show the master. And the thief, whoever he was, was not Found Out that time.

I wonder if the rascal is alive—an elderly scoundrel he

must be by this time; and a hoary old hypocrite, to whom an old schoolfellow presents his kindest regards—parenthetically remarking what a dreadful place that private school was; cold, chilblains, bad dinners, not enough victuals, and caning awful!—Are you alive still, I say, you nameless villain, who escaped discovery on that day of crime? I hope you have escaped often since, old sinner. Ah, what a lucky thing it is, for you and me, my man, that we are *not* found out in all our peccadilloes; and that our backs can slip away from the master and the cane!

Just consider what life would be, if every rogue was found out, and flogged *coram populo!* What a butchery, what an indecency, what an endless swishing of the rod! Don't cry out about my misanthropy. My good friend Mealymouth, I will trouble you to tell me, do you go to church? When there, do you say, or do you not, that you are a miserable sinner, and saying so do you believe or disbelieve it? If you are a M. S., don't you deserve correction, and aren't you grateful if you are to be let off? I say again what a blessed thing it is that we are not all found out!

Just picture to yourself everybody who does wrong being found out, and punished accordingly. Fancy all the boys in all the school being whipped; and then the assistants, and then the headmaster (Dr. Badford let us call him). Fancy the provost marshal being tied up, having previously superintended the correction of the whole army. After the young gentlemen have had their turn for the faulty exercises, fancy Dr. Lincolnsinn being taken up for certain faults in *his* Essay and Review. After the clergyman has cried his peccavi, suppose we hoist up a bishop, and give him a couple of dozen! (I see my Lord Bishop of Double-Gloucester sitting in a very uneasy posture on his right reverend bench.) After we have cast off the bishop, what are we to say to the Minister who appointed him? My Lord Cinqwarden, it is painful to have to use personal correction to a boy of your age; but really . . . *Siste tandem carnifex!* The butchery is too horrible. The hand drops

powerless, appalled at the quantity of birch which it must cut and brandish. I am glad we are not all found out, I say again; and protest, my dear brethren, against our having our deserts.

To fancy all men found out and punished is bad enough; but imagine all the women found out in the distinguished social circle in which you and I have the honor to move. Is it not a mercy that a many of these fair criminals remain unpunished and undiscovered! There is Mrs. Longbow, who is forever practicing, and who shoots poisoned arrows, too; when you meet her you don't call her liar, and charge her with the wickedness she has done and is doing. There is Mrs. Painter, who passes for a most respectable woman, and a model in society. There is no use in saying what you really know regarding her and her goings on. There is Diana Hunter—what a little haughty prude it is; and yet *we* know stories about her which are not altogether edifying. I say it is best for the sake of the good, that the bad should not all be found out. You don't want your children to know the history of that lady in the next box, who is so handsome, and whom they admire so. Ah me, what would life be if we were all found out and punished for all our faults? Jack Ketch would be in permanence; and then who would hang Jack Ketch?

They talk of murderers being pretty certainly found out. Psha! I have heard an authority awfully competent vow and declare that scores and hundreds of murders are committed, and nobody is the wiser. That terrible man mentioned one or two ways of committing murder, which he maintained were quite common, and were scarcely ever found out. A man, for instance, comes home to his wife, and . . . but I pause—I know that this Magazine has a very large circulation.[1] Hundreds and hundreds of thousands—why not say a million of people at once?—well, say a million, read it. And among these countless readers, I might be teaching some monster how to make away with his wife without being found out, some fiend of a woman

[1] *The Cornhill.*—Editor.

how to destroy her dear husband. I will *not* then tell this easy and simple way of murder, as communicated to me by a most respectable party in the confidence of private intercourse. Suppose some gentle reader were to try this most simple and easy receipt—it seems to me almost infallible—and come to grief in consequence, and be found out and hanged? Should I ever pardon myself for having been the means of doing injury to a single one of our esteemed subscribers? The prescription whereof I speak—that is to say, whereof I *don't* speak—shall be buried in this bosom. No, I am a humane man. I am not one of your Bluebeards to go and say to my wife, "My dear! I am going away for a few days to Brighton. Here are all the keys of the house. You may open every door and closet, except the one at the end of the oak room opposite the fireplace, with the little bronze Shakespeare on the mantelpiece (or what not)." I don't say this to a woman—unless, to be sure, I want to get rid of her—because, after such a caution, I know she'll peep into the closet. I say nothing about the closet at all. I keep the key in my pocket, and a being whom I love, but who, as I know, has many weaknesses, out of harm's way. You toss up your head, dear angel, drub on the ground with your lovely little feet, on the table with your sweet rosy fingers, and cry, "Oh, sneerer! You don't know the depth of woman's feeling, the lofty scorn of all deceit, the entire absence of mean curiosity in the sex, or never, never would you libel us so!" Ah, Delia! dear, dear Delia! It is because I fancy I *do* know something about you (not all, mind—no, no; no man knows that).—Ah, my bride, my ringdove, my rose, my poppet—choose, in fact, whatever name you like—bulbul of my grove, fountain of my desert, sunshine of my darkling life, and joy of my dungeoned existence, it is because I *do* know a little about you that I conclude to say nothing of that private closet, and keep my key in my pocket. You take away that closet key then, and the house key. You lock Delia in. You keep her out of harm's way and gadding, and so she never *can* be found out.

And yet by little strange accidents and coincidents how we are being found out every day. You remember that old story of the Abbé Kakatoes, who told the company at supper one night how the first confession he ever received was —from a murderer, let us say. Presently enters to supper the Marquis de Croquemitaine. "Palsambleu, abbé!" says the brilliant marquis, taking a pinch of snuff, "are you here? Gentlemen and ladies! I was the abbé's first penitent, and I made him a confession, which I promise you astonished him."

To be sure how queerly things are found out! Here is an instance. Only the other day I was writing in these Roundabout Papers about a certain man, whom I facetiously called Baggs, and who had abused me to my friends, who of course told me. Shortly after that paper was published another friend—Sacks let us call him—scowls fiercely at me as I am sitting in perfect good humor at the club, and passes on without speaking. A cut. A quarrel. Sacks thinks it is about him that I was writing: whereas, upon my honor and conscience, I never had him once in my mind, and was pointing my moral from quite another man. But don't you see, by this wrath of the guilty-conscienced Sacks, that he had been abusing me too? He has owned himself guilty, never having been accused. He has winced when nobody thought of hitting him. I did but put the cap out, and madly butting and chafing, behold my friend rushes out to put his head into it! Never mind, Sacks, you are found out; but I bear you no malice, my man.

And yet to be found out, I know from my own experience, must be painful and odious, and cruelly mortifying to the inward vanity. Suppose I am a poltroon, let us say. With fierce mustache, loud talk, plentiful oaths, and an immense stick, I keep up nevertheless a character for courage. I swear fearfully at cabmen and women; brandish my bludgeon, and perhaps knock down a little man or two with it: brag of the images which I break at the shooting gallery, and pass among my friends for a whiskery fire-eater, afraid of neither man nor dragon. Ah me! Suppose some

brisk little chap steps up and gives me a caning in St. James's Street, with all the heads of my friends looking out of all the club windows. My reputation is gone. I frighten no man more. My nose is pulled by whipper-snappers, who jump up on a chair to reach it. I am found out. And in the days of my triumphs, when people were yet afraid of me, and were taken in by my swagger, I always knew that I was a lily liver, and expected that I should be found out some day.

That certainty of being found out must haunt and depress many a bold braggadocio spirit. Let us say it is a clergyman, who can pump copious floods of tears out of his own eyes and those of his audience. He thinks to himself, "I am but a poor swindling, chattering rogue. My bills are unpaid. I have jilted several women whom I have promised to marry. I don't know whether I believe what I preach, and I know I have stolen the very sermon over which I have been sniveling. Have they found me out?" says he, as his head drops down on the cushion.

Then your writer, poet, historian, novelist, or what not? The *Beacon* says that "Jones's work is one of the first order." The *Lamp* declares that Jones's tragedy surpasses every work since the days of Him of Avon." The *Comet* asserts that "J's 'Life of Goody Twoshoes' is a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεὶ, a noble and enduring monument to the fame of that admirable Englishwoman," and so forth. But then Jones knows that he has lent the critic of the *Beacon* five pounds; that his publisher has a half share in the *Lamp;* and that the *Comet* comes repeatedly to dine with him. It is all very well. Jones is immortal until he is found out; and then down comes the extinguisher, and the immortal is dead and buried. The idea (*dies iræ!*) of discovery must haunt many a man, and make him uneasy, as the trumpets are puffing in his triumph. Brown, who has a higher place than he deserves, cowers before Smith, who has found him out. What is the chorus of critics shouting "Bravo"?—a public clapping hands and flinging garlands? Brown knows that Smith has found him out. Puff, trumpets!

Wave, banners! Huzza, boys, for the immortal Brown! "This is all very well," B. thinks (bowing the while, smiling, laying his hand to his heart); "but there stands Smith at the window: *he* has measured me; and some day the others will find me out too." It is a very curious sensation to sit by a man who has found you out, and who, as you know, has found you out; or, *vice versa,* to sit with a man whom *you* have found out. His talent? Bah! His virtue? We know a little story or two about his virtue, and he knows we know it. We are thinking over friend Robinson's antecedents, as we grin, bow and talk; and we are both humbugs together. Robinson a good fellow, is he? You know how he behaved to Hicks? A good-natured man, is he? Pray do you remember that little story of Mrs. Robinson's black eye? How men have to work, to talk, to smile, to go to bed, and try and sleep, with this dread of being found out on their consciences! Bardolph, who has robbed a church, and Nym, who has taken a purse, go to their usual haunts, and smoke their pipes with their companions. Mr. Detective Bullseye appears, and says, "Oh, Bardolph! I want you about that there pyx business!" Mr. Bardolph knocks the ashes out of his pipe, puts out his hands to the little steel cuffs, and walks away quite meekly. He is found out. He must go. "Good-by, Doll Tearsheet! Good-by, Mrs. Quickly, ma'am!" The other gentlemen and ladies *de la société* look on and exchange mute adieux with the departing friends. And an assured time will come when the other gentlemen and ladies will be found out too.

What a wonderful and beautiful provision of nature it has been that, for the most part, our womankind are not endowed with the faculty of finding us out! *They* don't doubt, and probe, and weigh, and take your measure. Lay down this paper, my benevolent friend and reader, go into your drawing-room now, and utter a joke ever so old, and I wager sixpence the ladies there will all begin to laugh. Go to Brown's house, and tell Mrs. Brown and the young ladies what you think of him, and see what a welcome you

will get! In like manner, let him come to your house, and tell *your* good lady his candid opinion of you, and fancy how she will receive him! Would you have your wife and children know you exactly for what you are, and esteem you precisely at your worth? If so, my friend, you will live in a dreary house, and you will have but a chilly fireside. Do you suppose the people round it don't see your homely face as under a glamour, and, as it were, with a halo of love round it? You don't fancy you *are* as you seem to them? No such thing, my man. Put away that monstrous conceit, and be thankful that *they* have not found you out.

Anonymous

The Pipe

I

"Randolph Crescent, N. W.

"My dear Pugh—I hope you will like the pipe which I send with this. It is rather a curious example of a certain school of Indian carving. And is a present from

"Yours truly, Joseph Tress."

It was really very handsome of Tress—very handsome! The more especially as I was aware that to give presents was not exactly in Tress's line. The truth is that when I saw what manner of pipe it was I was amazed. It was contained in a sandalwood box, which was itself illustrated with some remarkable specimens of carving. I use the word "remarkable" advisedly, because, although the workmanship was undoubtedly, in its way, artistic, the result could not be described as beautiful. The carver had thought proper to ornament the box with some of the ugliest figures I remember to have seen. They appeared to me to be devils. Or perhaps they were intended to represent deities appertaining to some mythological system with which, thank goodness, I am unacquainted. The pipe itself was worthy of the case in which it was contained. It was of meerschaum, with an amber mouthpiece. It was rather too large for ordinary smoking. But then, of course, one doesn't smoke a pipe like that. There are pipes in my collection which I should as soon think of smoking as I should of eating. Ask a china maniac to let you have afternoon tea out of his Old Chelsea, and you will learn some home truths as to the durability of human friendships.

The glory of the pipe, as Tress had suggested, lay in its carving. Not that I claim that it was beautiful, any more than I make such a claim for the carving on the box, but, as Tress said in his note, it was curious.

The stem and the bowl were quite plain, but on the edge of the bowl was perched some kind of lizard. I told myself it was an octopus when I first saw it, but I have since had reason to believe that it was some almost unique member of the lizard tribe. The creature was represented as climbing over the edge of the bowl down toward the stem, and its legs, or feelers, or tentacula, or whatever the things are called, were, if I may use a vulgarism, sprawling about "all over the place." For instance, two or three of them were twined about the bowl, two or three of them were twisted round the stem, and one, a particularly horrible one, was uplifted in the air, so that if you put the pipe in your mouth the thing was pointing straight at your nose.

Not the least agreeable feature about the creature was that it was hideously lifelike. It appeared to have been carved in amber, but some coloring matter must have been introduced, for inside the amber the creature was of a peculiarly ghastly green. The more I examined the pipe the more amazed I was at Tress's generosity. He and I are rival collectors. I am not going to say, in so many words, that his collection of pipes contains nothing but rubbish, because, as a matter of fact, he has two or three rather decent specimens. But to compare his collection to mine would be absurd. Tress is conscious of this, and he resents it. He resents it to such an extent that he has been known, at least on one occasion, to declare that one single pipe of his—I believe he alluded to the Brummagem relic preposterously attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh—was worth the whole of my collection put together. Although I have forgotten this, as I hope I always shall forgive remarks made when envious passions get the better of our nobler nature, even of a Joseph Tress, it is not to be supposed that I have forgotten it. He was, therefore, not

at all the sort of person from whom I expected to receive a present. And such a present! I do not believe that he himself had a finer pipe in his collection. And to have given it to me! I had misjudged the man. I wondered where he had got it from. I had seen his pipes; I knew them off by heart—and some nice trumpery he has among them, too! but I had never seen *that* pipe before. The more I looked at it, the more my amazement grew. The beast perched upon the edge of the bowl was so lifelike. Its two bead-like eyes seemed to gleam at me with positively human intelligence. The pipe fascinated me to such an extent that I actually resolved to—smoke it!

I filled it with Perique. Ordinarily I use Birdseye, but on those very rare occasions on which I use a specimen I smoke Perique. I lit up with quite a small sensation of excitement. As I did so I kept my eyes perforce fixed upon the beast. The beast pointed its upraised tentacle directly at me. As I inhaled the pungent tobacco that tentacle impressed me with a feeling of actual uncanniness. It was broad daylight, and I was smoking in front of the window, yet to such an extent was I affected that it seemed to me that the tentacle was not only vibrating, which, owing to the peculiarity of its position, was quite within the range of probability, but actually moving, elongating—stretching forward, that is, farther toward me, and toward the tip of my nose. So impressed was I by this idea that I took the pipe out of my mouth and minutely examined the beast. Really, the delusion was excusable. So cunningly had the artist wrought that he succeeded in producing a creature which, such was its uncanniness, I could only hope had no original in nature.

Replacing the pipe between my lips I took several whiffs. Never had smoking had such an effect on me before. Either the pipe, or the creature on it, exercised some singular fascination. I seemed, without an instant's warning, to be passing into some land of dreams. I saw the beast, which was perched upon the bowl, writhe and twist. I saw it lift itself bodily from the meerschaum.

II

"FEELING better now?"

I looked up. Joseph Tress was speaking.

"What's the matter? Have I been ill?"

"You appear to have been in some kind of swoon."

Tress's tone was peculiar, even a little dry.

"Swoon! I never was guilty of such a thing in my life."

"Nor was I, until I smoked that pipe."

I sat up. The act of sitting up made me conscious of the fact that I had been lying down. Conscious, too, that I was feeling more than a little dazed. It seemed as though I was waking out of some strange, lethargic sleep—a kind of feeling which I have read of and heard about, but never before experienced.

"Where am I?"

"You're on the couch in your own room. You *were* on the floor; but I thought it would be better to pick you up and place you on the couch—though no one performed the same kind office to me when I was on the floor."

Again Tress's tone was distinctly dry.

"How came *you* here?"

"Ah, that's the question." He rubbed his chin—a habit of his which has annoyed me more than once before. "Do you think you're sufficiently recovered to enable you to understand a little simple explanation?" I stared at him, amazed. He went on stroking his chin. "The truth is that when I sent you the pipe I made a slight omission."

"An omission?"

"I omitted to advise you not to smoke it."

"And why?"

"Because—well, I've reason to believe the thing is drugged."

"Drugged!"

"Or poisoned."

"Poisoned!" I was wide awake enough then. I jumped off the couch with a celerity which proved it.

"It is this way. I became its owner in rather a singular manner." He paused, as if for me to make a remark; but I was silent. "It is not often that I smoke a specimen, but, for some reason, I did smoke this. I commenced to smoke it, that is. How long I continued to smoke it is more than I can say. It had on me the same peculiar effect which it appears to have had on you. When I recovered consciousness I was lying on the floor."

"On the floor?"

"On the floor. In about as uncomfortable a position as you can easily conceive. I was lying face downward, with my legs bent under me. I was never so surprised in my life as I was when I found myself *where* I was. At first I supposed that I had had a stroke. But by degrees it dawned upon me that I didn't *feel* as though I had had a stroke." Tress, by the way, has been an army surgeon. "I was conscious of distinct nausea. Looking about, I saw the pipe. With me it had fallen on to the floor. I took it for granted, considering the delicacy of the carving, that the fall had broken it. But when I picked it up I found it quite uninjured. While I was examining it a thought flashed to my brain. Might it not be answerable for what had happened to me? Suppose, for instance, it was drugged? I had heard of such things. Besides, in my case were present all the symptoms of drug poisoning, though what drug had been used I couldn't in the least conceive. I resolved that I would give the pipe another trial."

"On yourself? or on another party, meaning me?"

"On myself, my dear Pugh—on myself! At that point of my investigations I had not begun to think of you. I lit up and had another smoke."

"With what result?"

"Well, that depends on the standpoint from which you regard the thing. From one point of view the result was wholly satisfactory—I proved that the thing was drugged, and more."

"Did you have another fall?"

"I did. And something else besides."

"On that account, I presume, you resolved to pass the treasure on to me?"

"Partly on that account, and partly on another."

"On my word, I appreciate your generosity. You might have labeled the thing as poison."

"Exactly. But then you must remember how often you have told me that you *never* smoke your specimens."

"That was no reason why you shouldn't have given me a hint that the thing was more dangerous than dynamite."

"That did occur to me afterwards. Therefore I called to supply the slight omission."

"*Slight* omission, you call it! I wonder what you would have called it if you had found me dead."

"If I had known that you *intended* smoking it I should not have been at all surprised if I had."

"Really, Tress, I appreciate your kindness more and more! And where is this example of your splendid benevolence? Have you pocketed it, regretting your lapse into the unaccustomed paths of generosity? Or is it smashed to atoms?"

"Neither the one nor the other. You will find the pipe upon the table. I neither desire its restoration nor is it in any way injured. It is merely an expression of personal opinion when I say that I don't believe that it *could* be injured. Of course, having discovered its deleterious properties, you will not want to smoke it again. You will therefore be able to enjoy the consciousness of being the possessor of what I honestly believe to be the most remarkable pipe in existence. Good day, Pugh."

He was gone before I could say a word. I immediately concluded, from the precipitancy of his flight, that the pipe *was* injured. But when I subjected it to close examination I could discover no signs of damage. While I was still eying it with jealous scrutiny the door reopened, and Tress came in again.

"By the way, Pugh, there is one thing I might mention, especially as I know it won't make any difference to you."

"That depends on what it is. If you have changed your mind, and want the pipe back again, I tell you frankly that it won't. In my opinion, a thing once given is given for good."

"Quite so; I don't want it back again. You may make your mind easy on that point. I merely wanted to tell you *why* I gave it you."

"You have told me that already."

"Only partly, my dear Pugh—only partly. You don't suppose I should have given you such a pipe as that merely because it happened to be drugged? Scarcely! I gave it you because I discovered from indisputable evidence, and to my cost, that it was haunted."

"Haunted?"

"Yes, haunted. Good day."

He was gone again. I ran out of the room, and shouted after him down the stairs. He was already at the bottom of the flight.

"Tress! Come back! What do you mean by talking such nonsense?"

"Of course it's only nonsense. We know that that sort of thing always is nonsense. But if you should have reason to suppose that there is something in it besides nonsense, you may think it worth your while to make inquiries of me. But I won't have that pipe back again in my possession on any terms—mind that!"

The bang of the front door told me that he had gone out into the street. I let him go. I laughed to myself as I reëntered the room. Haunted! That was not a bad idea of his. I saw the whole position at a glance. The truth of the matter was that he did regret his generosity, and he was ready to go any lengths if he could only succeed in cajoling me into restoring his gift. He was aware that I have views upon certain matters which are not wholly in accordance with those which are popularly supposed to be the views of the day, and particularly that on the question of what are commonly called supernatural visitations I have a standpoint of my own. Therefore, it

was not a bad move on his part to try to make me believe that about the pipe on which he knew I had set my heart there was something which could not be accounted for by ordinary laws. Yet, as his own sense would have told him it would do, if he had only allowed himself to reflect for a moment, the move failed. Because I am not yet so far gone as to suppose that a pipe, a thing of meerschaum and of amber, in the sense in which I understand the word, *could* be haunted—a pipe, a mere pipe.

"Hollo! I thought the creature's legs were twined right round the bowl!"

I was holding the pipe in my hand, regarding it with the affectionate eyes with which a connoisseur does regard a curio, when I was induced to make this exclamation. I was certainly under the impression that, when I first took the pipe out of the box, two, if not three of the feelers had been twined about the bowl—twined *tightly*, so that you could not see daylight between them and it. Now they were almost entirely detached, only the tips touching the meerschaum, and those particular feelers were gathered up as though the creature were in the act of taking a spring. Of course I was under a misapprehension: the feelers *couldn't* have been twined; a moment before I should have been ready to bet a thousand to one that they were. Still, one does make mistakes, and very egregious mistakes, at times. At the same time, I confess that when I saw that dreadful-looking animal poised on the extreme edge of the bowl, for all the world as though it were just going to spring at me, I was a little startled. I remembered that when I was smoking the pipe I did think I saw the uplifted tentacle moving, as though it were reaching out to me. And I had a clear recollection that just as I had been sinking into that strange state of unconsciousness, I had been under the impression that the creature was writhing and twisting, as though it had suddenly become instinct with life. Under the circumstances, these reflections were not pleasant. I wished Tress had not talked that nonsense about the thing being haunted. It was surely suffi-

cient to know that it was drugged and poisonous, without anything else.

I replaced it in the sandalwood box. I locked the box in a cabinet. Quite apart from the question as to whether that pipe was or was not haunted, I know it haunted me. It was with me in a figurative—which was worse than actual—sense all the day. Still worse, it was with me all the night. It was with me in my dreams. Such dreams! Possibly I had not yet wholly recovered from the effects of that insidious drug, but, whether or no, it was very wrong of Tress to set my thoughts into such a channel. He knows that I am of a highly imaginative temperament, and that it is easier to get morbid thoughts into my mind than to get them out again. Before that night was through I wished very heartily that I had never seen the pipe! I woke from one nightmare to fall into another. One dreadful dream was with me all the time—of a hideous, green reptile which advanced toward me out of some awful darkness, slowly, inch by inch, until it clutched me round the neck, and, gluing its lips to mine, sucked the life's blood out of my veins as it embraced me with a slimy kiss. Such dreams are not restful. I woke anything but refreshed when the morning came. And when I got up and dressed I felt that, on the whole, it would perhaps have been better if I never had gone to bed. My nerves were unstrung, and I had that generally tremulous feeling which is, I believe, an inseparable companion of the more advanced stages of dipsomania. I ate no breakfast. I am no breakfast eater as a rule, but that morning I ate absolutely nothing.

"If this sort of thing is to continue, I will let Tress have his pipe again. He may have the laugh of me, but anything is better than this."

It was with almost funereal forebodings that I went to the cabinet in which I had placed the sandalwood box. But when I opened it my feelings of gloom partially vanished. Of what phantasies had I been guilty! It must have been an entire delusion on my part to have supposed that those

tentacula had ever been twined about the bowl. The creature was in exactly the same position in which I had left it the day before—as, of course, I knew it would be—poised, as if about to spring. I was telling myself how foolish I had been to allow myself to dwell for a moment on Tress's words, when Martin Brasher was shown in.

Brasher is an old friend of mine. We have a common ground—ghosts. Only we approach them from different points of view. He takes the scientific—psychological—inquiry side. He is always anxious to hear of a ghost, so that he may have an opportunity of "showing it up."

"I've something in your line here," I observed, as he came in.

"In my line? How so? *I'm* not pipe mad."

"No; but you're ghost mad. And this is a haunted pipe."

"A haunted pipe! I think you're rather more mad about ghosts, my dear Pugh, than I am."

Then I told him all about it. He was deeply interested, especially when I told him that the pipe was drugged. But when I repeated Tress's words about its being haunted, and mentioned my own delusion about the creature moving, he took a more serious view of the case than I had expected he would do.

"I propose that we act on Tress's suggestion, and go and make inquiries of him."

"But you don't really think that there is anything in it?"

"On these subjects I never allow myself to think at all. There are Tress's words, and there is your story. It is agreed on all hands that the pipe has peculiar properties. It seems to me that there is a sufficient case here to merit inquiry."

He persuaded me. I went with him. The pipe, in the sandalwood box, went too. Tress received us with a grin—a grin which was accentuated when I placed the sandalwood box on the table.

"You understand," he said, "that a gift is a gift. On no terms will I consent to receive that pipe back in my possession."

I was rather nettled by his tone.

"You need be under no alarm. I have no intention of suggesting anything of the kind."

"Our business here," began Brasher—I must own that his manner is a little ponderous—"is of a scientific, I may say also, and at the same time, of a judicial nature. Our object is the Pursuit of Truth and the Advancement of Inquiry."

"Have you been trying another smoke?" inquired Tress, nodding his head toward me.

Before I had time to answer, Brasher went droning on:

"Our friend here tells me that you say this pipe is haunted."

"I say it is haunted because it *is* haunted."

I looked at Tress. I half suspected that he was poking fun at us. But he appeared to be serious enough.

"In these matters," remarked Brasher, as though he were giving utterance to a new and important truth, "there is a scientific and nonscientific method of inquiry. The scientific method is to begin at the beginning. May I ask how this pipe came into your possession?"

Tress paused before he answered.

"You may ask." He paused again. "Oh, you certainly may ask. But it doesn't follow that I shall tell you."

"Surely your object, like ours, can be but the Spreading About of the Truth?"

"I don't see it at all. It is possible to imagine a case in which the spreading about of the truth might make me look a little awkward."

"Indeed!" Brasher pursed up his lips. "Your words would almost lead one to suppose that there was something about your method of acquiring the pipe which you have good and weighty reasons for concealing."

"I don't know why I should conceal the thing from you. I don't suppose either of you is any better than I am. I don't mind telling you how I got the pipe. I stole it."

"Stole it!"

Brasher seemed both amazed and shocked. But I, who had previous experience of Tress's methods of adding to his collection, was not at all surprised. Some of the pipes which he calls his, if only the whole truth about them were publicly known, would send him to jail.

"That's nothing!" he continued. "All collectors steal! The eighth commandment was not intended to apply to them. Why, Pugh there has 'conveyed' three fourths of the pipes which he flatters himself are his."

I was so dumfoundered by the charge that it took my breath away. I sat in astounded silence. Tress went raving on:

"I was so shy of this particular pipe when I had obtained it, that I put it away for quite three months. When I took it out to have a look at it something about the thing so tickled me that I resolved to smoke it. Owing to peculiar circumstances attending the manner in which the thing came into my possession, and on which I need not dwell—you don't like to dwell on those sort of things, do you, Pugh?—I knew really nothing about the pipe. As was the case with Pugh, one peculiarity I learned from actual experience. It was also from actual experience that I learned that the thing was—well, I said haunted, but you may use any other word you like."

"Tell us, as briefly as possible, what it was you really did discover."

"Take the pipe out of the box!" Brasher took the pipe out of the box and held it in his hand. "You see that creature on it. Well, when I first had it it was underneath the pipe."

"How do you mean that it was underneath the pipe?"

"It was bunched together underneath the stem, just at the end of the mouthpiece, in the same way in which a fly might be suspended from the ceiling. When I began to smoke the pipe I saw the creature move."

"But I thought that unconsciousness immediately followed."

"It did follow, but not before I saw that the thing was

moving. It was because I thought that I had been, in a way, a victim of delirium that I tried the second smoke. Suspecting that the thing was drugged I swallowed what I believed would prove a powerful antidote. It enabled me to resist the influence of the narcotic much longer than before, and while I still retained my senses I saw the creature crawl along under the stem and over the bowl. It was that sight, I believe, as much as anything else, which sent me silly. When I came to I then and there decided to present the pipe to Pugh. There is one more thing I would remark. When the pipe left me the creature's legs were twined about the bowl. Now they are withdrawn. Possibly you, Pugh, are able to cap my story with a little one which is all your own."

"I certainly did imagine that I saw the creature move. But I supposed that while I was under the influence of the drug imagination had played me a trick."

"Not a bit of it! Depend upon it, the beast is bewitched. Even to my eye it looks as though it were, and to a trained eye like yours, Pugh! You've been looking for the devil a long time, and you've got him at last."

"I—I wish you wouldn't make those remarks, Tress. They jar on me."

"I confess," interpolated Brasher—I noticed that he had put the pipe down on the table as though he were tired of holding it—"that, to *my* thinking, such remarks are not appropriate. At the same time what you have told us is, I am bound to allow, a little curious. But of course what I require is ocular demonstration. I haven't seen the movement myself."

"No, but you very soon will do if you care to have a pull at the pipe on your own account. Do, Brasher, to oblige me! There's a dear!"

"It appears, then, that the movement is only observable when the pipe is smoked. We have at least arrived at step No. 1."

"Here's a match, Brasher! Light up, and we shall have arrived at step No. 2."

Tress lit a match and held it out to Brasher. Brasher retreated from its neighborhood.

"Thank you, Mr. Tress, I am no smoker, as you are aware. And I have no desire to acquire the art of smoking by means of a poisoned pipe."

Tress laughed. He blew out the match and threw it into the grate.

"Then I tell you what I'll do—I'll have up Bob."

"Bob—why Bob?"

"Bob"—whose real name was Robert Haines, though I should think he must have forgotten the fact, so seldom was he addressed by it—was Tress's servant. He had been an old soldier, and had accompanied his master when he left the service. He was as depraved a character as Tress himself. I am not sure even that he was not worse than his master. I shall never forget how he once behaved toward myself. He actually had the assurance to accuse me of attempting to steal the Wardour Street relic which Tress fondly deludes himself was once the property of Sir Walter Raleigh. The truth is that I had slipped it with my handkerchief into my pocket in a fit of absence of mind. A man who could accuse *me* of such a thing would be guilty of anything. I was therefore quite at one with Brasher when he asked what Bob could possibly be wanted for. Tress explained.

"I'll get him to smoke the pipe," he said.

Brasher and I exchanged glances, but we refrained from speech.

"It won't do him any harm," said Tress.

"What—not a poisoned pipe?" asked Brasher.

"It's not poisoned—it's only drugged."

"*Only* drugged!"

"Nothing hurts Bob. He is like an ostrich. He has digestive organs which are peculiarly his own. It will only serve him as it served me—and Pugh—it will knock him over. It is all done in the Pursuit of Truth and for the Advancement of Inquiry."

I could see that Brasher did not altogether like the tone

in which Tress repeated his words. As for me, it was not to be supposed that I should put myself out in a matter which in no way concerned me. If Tress chose to poison the man, it was his affair, not mine. He went to the door and shouted:

"Bob! Come here, you scoundrel!"

That is the way in which he speaks to him. No really decent servant would stand it. I shouldn't care to address Nalder, my servant, in such a way. He would give me notice on the spot. Bob came in. He is a great hulking fellow who is always on the grin. Tress had a decanter of brandy in his hand. He filled a tumbler with the neat spirit.

"Bob, what would you say to a glassful of brandy—the real thing—my boy?"

"Thank you, sir."

"And what would you say to a pull at a pipe when the brandy is drunk!"

"A pipe?" The fellow is sharp enough when he likes. I saw him look at the pipe upon the table, and then at us, and then a gleam of intelligence came into his eyes. "I'd do it for a dollar, sir."

"A dollar, you thief?"

"I meant ten shillings, sir."

"Ten shillings, you brazen vagabond?"

"I should have said a pound."

"A pound! Was ever the like of that! Do I understand you to ask a pound for taking a pull at your master's pipe?"

"I'm thinking that I'll have to make it two."

"The deuce you are! Here, Pugh, lend me a pound."

"I'm afraid I've left my purse behind."

"Then lend me ten shillings—Ananias!"

"I doubt if I have more than five."

"Then give me the five. And, Brasher, lend me the other fifteen."

Brasher lent him the fifteen. I doubt if we shall either of us ever see our money again. He handed the pound to Bob.

"Here's the brandy—drink it up!" Bob drank it with-

out a word, draining the glass of every drop. "And here's the pipe."

"Is it poisoned, sir?"

"Poisoned, you villain! What do you mean?"

"It isn't the first time I've seen your tricks, sir—is it now? And you're not the one to give a pound for nothing at all. If it kills me you'll send my body to my mother—she'd like to know that I was dead."

"Send your body to your grandmother! You idiot, sit down and smoke!"

Bob sat down. Tress had filled the pipe, and handed it, with a lighted match, to Bob. The fellow declined the match. He handled the pipe very gingerly, turning it over and over, eying it with all his eyes.

"Thank you, sir—I'll light up myself if it's the same to you. I carry matches of my own. It's a beautiful pipe, entirely. I never see the like of it for ugliness. And what's the slimy-looking varmint that looks as though it would like to have my life? Is it living, or is it dead?"

"Come, we don't want to sit here all day, my man!"

"Well, sir, the look of this here pipe has quite upset my stomach. I'd like another drop of liquor, if it's the same to you."

"Another drop! Why, you've had a tumblerful already! Here's another tumblerful to put on top of that. You won't want the pipe to kill you—you'll be killed before you get to it."

"And isn't it better to die a natural death?"

Bob emptied the second tumbler of brandy as though it were water. I believe he would empty a hogshead without turning a hair! Then he gave another look at the pipe. Then, taking a match from his waistcoat pocket, he drew a long breath, as though he were resigning himself to fate. Striking the match on the seat of his trousers, while, shaded by his hand, the flame was gathering strength, he looked at each of us in turn. When he looked at Tress I distinctly saw him wink his eye. What my feelings would have been if a servant of mine had winked his eye at me I am unable

to imagine! The match was applied to the tobacco, a puff of smoke came through his lips—the pipe was alight!

During this process of lighting the pipe we had sat—I do not wish to use exaggerated language, but we had sat and watched that alcoholic scamp's proceedings as though we were witnessing an action which would leave its mark upon the age. When we saw the pipe was lighted we gave a simultaneous start. Brasher put his hands under his coat tails and gave a kind of hop. I raised myself a good six inches from my chair, and Tress rubbed his palms together with a chuckle. Bob alone was calm.

"Now," cried Tress, "you'll see the devil moving."

Bob took the pipe from between his lips.

"See what?" he said.

"Bob, you rascal, put that pipe back into your mouth, and smoke it for your life!"

Bob was eying the pipe askance.

"I dare say, but what I want to know is whether this here varmint's dead or whether he isn't. I don't want to have him flying at my nose—and he looks vicious enough for anything."

"Give me back that pound, you thief, and get out of my house, and bundle."

"I ain't going to give you back no pound."

"Then smoke that pipe!"

"I am smoking it, ain't I?"

With the utmost deliberation Bob returned the pipe to his mouth. He emitted another whiff or two of smoke.

"Now—now!" cried Tress, all excitement, and wagging his hand in the air.

We gathered round. As we did so Bob again withdrew the pipe.

"What is the meaning of all this here? I ain't going to have you playing none of your larks on me. I know there's something up, but I ain't going to throw my life away for twenty shillings—not quite I ain't."

Tress, whose temper is not at any time one of the best, was seized with quite a spasm of rage.

"As I live, my lad, if you try to cheat me by taking that pipe from between your lips until I tell you, you leave this room that instant, never again to be a servant of mine."

I presume the fellow knew from long experience when his master meant what he said, and when he didn't. Without an attempt at remonstrance he replaced the pipe. He continued stolidly to puff away. Tress caught me by the arm.

"What did I tell you? There—there! That tentacle is moving."

The uplifted tentacle *was* moving. It was doing what I had seen it do, as I supposed, in my distorted imagination —it was reaching forward. Undoubtedly Bob saw what it was doing; but, whether in obedience to his master's commands, or whether because the drug was already beginning to take effect, he made no movement to withdraw the pipe. He watched the slowly advancing tentacle, coming closer and closer toward his nose, with an expression of such intense horror on his countenance that it became quite shocking. Farther and farther the creature reached forward, until on a sudden, with a sort of jerk, the movement assumed a downward direction, and the tentacle was slowly lowered until the tip rested on the stem of the pipe. For a moment the creature remained motionless. I was quieting my nerves with the reflection that this thing was but some trick of the carver's art, and that what we had seen we had seen in a sort of nightmare, when the whole hideous reptile was seized with what seemed to be a fit of convulsive shuddering. It seemed to be in agony. It trembled so violently that I expected to see it loosen its hold of the stem and fall to the ground. I was sufficiently master of myself to steal a glance at Bob. We had had an inkling of what might happen. He was wholly unprepared. As he saw that dreadful, human-looking creature, coming to life, as it seemed, within an inch or two of his nose, his eyes dilated to twice their usual size. I hoped, for his sake, that unconsciousness would supervene, through the action

of the drug, before through sheer fright his senses left him. Perhaps mechanically he puffed steadily on.

The creature's shuddering became more violent. It appeared to swell before our eyes. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the shuddering ceased. There was another instant of quiescence. Then the creature began to crawl along the stem of the pipe! It moved with marvelous caution, the merest fraction of an inch at a time. But still it moved! Our eyes were riveted on it with a fascination which was absolutely nauseous. I am unpleasantly affected even as I think of it now. My dreams of the night before had been nothing to this.

Slowly, slowly, it went, nearer and nearer to the smoker's nose. Its mode of progression was in the highest degree unsightly. It glided, never, so far as I could see, removing its tentacles from the stem of the pipe. It slipped its hindmost feelers onward until they came up to those which were in advance. Then, in their turn, it advanced those which were in front. It seemed, too, to move with the utmost labor, shuddering as though it were in pain.

We were all, for our parts, speechless. I was momentarily hoping that the drug would take effect on Bob. Either his constitution enabled him to offer a strong resistance to narcotics, or else the large quantity of neat spirit which he had drunk acted—as Tress had malevolently intended that it should—as an antidote. It seemed to me that he would *never* succumb. On went the creature—on, and on, in its infinitesimal progression. I was spellbound. I would have given the world to scream, to have been able to utter a sound. I could do nothing else but watch.

The creature had reached the end of the stem. It had gained the amber mouthpiece. It was within an inch of the smoker's nose. Still on it went. It seemed to move with greater freedom on the amber. It increased its rate of progress. It was actually touching the foremost feature on the smoker's countenance. I expected to see it grip the wretched Bob, when it began to oscillate from side to side. Its oscillations increased in violence. It fell to the floor.

That same instant the narcotic prevailed. Bob slipped sideways from the chair, the pipe still held tightly between his rigid jaws.

We were silent. There lay Bob. Close beside him lay the creature. A few more inches to the left, and he would have fallen on and squashed it flat. It had fallen on its back. Its feelers were extended upward. They were writhing and twisting and turning in the air.

Tress was the first to speak.

"I think a little brandy won't be amiss." Emptying the remainder of the brandy into a glass, he swallowed it at a draught. "Now for a closer examination of our friend." Taking a pair of tongs from the grate he nipped the creature between them. He deposited it upon the table. "I rather fancy that this is a case for dissection."

He took a penknife from his waistcoat pocket. Opening the large blade, he thrust its point into the object on the table. Little or no resistance seemed to be offered to the passage of the blade, but as it was inserted the tentacula simultaneously began to writhe and twist. Tress withdrew the knife.

"I thought so!" He held the blade out for our inspection. The point was covered with some viscid-looking matter. "That's blood! The thing's alive!"

"Alive!"

"Alive! That's the secret of the whole performance!"

"But——"

"But me no buts, my Pugh! The mystery's exploded! One more ghost is lost to the world! The person from whom I *obtained* that pipe was an Indian juggler—up to many tricks of the trade. He, or some one for him, got hold of this sweet thing in reptiles—and a sweeter thing would, I imagine, be hard to find—and covered it with some preparation of, possibly, gum arabic. He allowed this to harden. Then he stuck the thing—still living, for those sort of gentry are hard to kill—to the pipe. The consequence was that when anyone lit up, the warmth was communicated to the adhesive agent—again some prepara-

tion of gum, no doubt—it moistened it, and the creature, with infinite difficulty, was able to move. But I am open to lay odds with any gentleman of sporting tastes that *this* time the creature's traveling days *are* done. It has given me rather a larger taste of the horrors than is good for my digestion."

With the aid of the tongs he removed the creature from the table. He placed it on the hearth. Before Brasher or I had a notion of what it was he intended to do he covered it with a heavy marble paper weight. Then he stood upon the weight, and between the marble and the hearth he ground the creature flat.

While the execution was still proceeding, Bob sat up upon the floor.

"Hollo!" he asked, "what's happened?"

"We've emptied the bottle, Bob," said Tress. "But there's another where that came from. Perhaps you could drink another tumblerful, my boy?"

Bob drank it!

FOOTNOTE

"Those gentry are hard to kill." Here is fact, not fantasy. Lizard yarns no less sensational than this Mystery Story can be found between the covers of solemn, zoölogical textbooks.

Reptiles, indeed, are far from finicky in the matters of air, space, and especially warmth. Frogs and other such sluggish-blooded creatures have lived after being frozen fast in ice. Their blood is little warmer than air or water, enjoying no extra casing of fur or feathers.

Air and food seem held in light esteem by lizards. Their blood need not be highly oxygenated; it nourishes just as well when impure. In temperate climes lizards lie torpid and buried all winter; some species of the tropic deserts sleep peacefully all summer. Their anatomy includes no means for the continuous introduction and expulsion of air; reptilian lungs are little more than closed sacs, without cell structure.

If any further zoölogical fact were needed to verify the dénouement of "The Pipe," it might be the general statement that lizards are abnormal brutes anyhow. Consider the chameleons of unsettled hue. And what is one to think of an animal which, when captured by the tail, is able to make its escape by willfully shuffling off that appendage?—EDITOR.

The Puzzle

I

Pugh came into my room holding something wrapped in a piece of brown paper.

"Tress, I have brought you something on which you may exercise your ingenuity." He began, with exasperating deliberation, to untie the string which bound his parcel; he is one of those persons who would not cut a knot to save their lives. The process occupied him the better part of a quarter of an hour. Then he held out the contents of the paper.

"What do you think of that?" he asked. I thought nothing of it, and I told him so. "I was prepared for that confession. I have noticed, Tress, that you generally do think nothing of an article which really deserves the attention of a truly thoughtful mind. Possibly, as you think so little of it, you will be able to solve the puzzle."

I took what he held out to me. It was an oblong box, perhaps seven inches long by three inches broad.

"Where's the puzzle?" I asked.

"If you will examine the lid of the box, you will see."

I turned it over and over; it was difficult to see which was the lid. Then I perceived that on one side were printed these words:

"PUZZLE: TO OPEN THE BOX"

The words were so faintly printed that it was not surprising that I had not noticed them at first. Pugh explained.

"I observed that box on a tray outside a second-hand furniture shop. It struck my eye. I took it up. I examined it. I inquired of the proprietor of the shop in what the puzzle lay. He replied that that was more than he could tell me. He himself had made several attempts

to open the box, and all of them had failed. I purchased it. I took it home. I have tried, and I have failed. I am aware, Tress, of how you pride yourself upon your ingenuity. I cannot doubt that, if you try, you will not fail."

While Pugh was prosing, I was examining the box. It was at least well made. It weighed certainly under two ounces. I struck it with my knuckles; it sounded hollow. There was no hinge; nothing of any kind to show that it ever had been opened, or, for the matter of that, that it ever could be opened. The more I examined the thing, the more it whetted my curiosity. That it could be opened, and in some ingenious manner, I made no doubt—but how?

The box was not a new one. At a rough guess I should say that it had been a box for a good half century; there were certain signs of age about it which could not escape a practiced eye. Had it remained unopened all that time? When opened, what would be found inside? It *sounded* hollow; probably nothing at all—who could tell?

It was formed of small pieces of inlaid wood. Several woods had been used; some of them were strange to me. They were of different colors; it was pretty obvious that they must all of them have been hard woods. The pieces were of various shapes—hexagonal, octagonal, triangular, square, oblong, and even circular. The process of inlaying them had been beautifully done. So nicely had the parts been joined that the lines of meeting were difficult to discover with the naked eye; they had been joined solid, so to speak. It was an excellent example of marquetry. I had been over-hasty in my deprecation; I owed as much to Pugh.

"This box of yours is better worth looking at than I first supposed. Is it to be sold?"

"No, it is not to be sold. Nor"—he "fixed" me with his spectacles—"is it to be given away. I have brought it to you for the simple purpose of ascertaining if you have ingenuity enough to open it."

"I will engage to open it in two seconds—with a hammer."

"I dare say. *I* will open it with a hammer. The thing is to open it without."

"Let me see." I began, with the aid of a microscope, to examine the box more closely. "I will give you one piece of information, Pugh. Unless I am mistaken, the secret lies in one of these little pieces of inlaid wood. You push it, or you press it, or something, and the whole affair flies open."

"Such was my own first conviction. I am not so sure of it now. I have pressed every separate piece of wood; I have tried to move each piece in every direction. No result has followed. My theory was a hidden spring."

"But there must be a hidden spring of some sort, unless you are to open it by a mere exercise of force. I suppose the box is empty."

"I thought it was at first, but now I am not so sure of that either. It all depends on the position in which you hold it. Hold it in this position—like this—close to your ear. Have you a small hammer?" I took a small hammer. "Tap it softly, with the hammer. Don't you notice a sort of reverberation within?"

Pugh was right, there certainly was something within; something which seemed to echo back my tapping, almost as if it were a living thing. I mentioned this to Pugh.

"But you don't think that there is something alive inside the box? There can't be. The box must be air-tight, probably as much air-tight as an exhausted receiver."

"How do we know that? How can we tell that no minute interstices have been left for the express purpose of ventilation?" I continued tapping with the hammer. I noticed one peculiarity, that it was only when I held the box in a particular position, and tapped at a certain spot, there came the answering taps from within. "I tell you what it is, Pugh, what I hear is the reverberation of some machinery."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Give the box to me." Pugh put the box to his ear. He tapped. "It sounds to me like the echoing tick, tick of some great beetle; like the sort of noise which a deathwatch makes, you know."

Trust Pugh to find a remarkable explanation for a simple fact; if the explanation leans toward the supernatural, so much the more satisfactory to Pugh. I knew better.

"The sound which you hear is merely the throbbing or the trembling of the mechanism with which it is intended that the box should be opened. The mechanism is placed just where you are tapping it with the hammer. Every tap causes it to jar."

"It sounds to me like the ticking of a deathwatch. However, on such subjects, Tress, I know what you are."

"My dear Pugh, give it an extra hard tap, and you will see."

He gave it an extra hard tap. The moment he had done so, he started.

"I've done it now."

"What have you done?"

"Broken something, I fancy." He listened intently, with his ear to the box. "No—it seems all right. And yet I could have sworn I had damaged something; I heard it smash."

"Give me the box." He gave it me. In my turn, I listened. I shook the box. Pugh must have been mistaken. Nothing rattled; there was not a sound; the box was as empty as before. I gave a smart tap with the hammer, as Pugh had done. Then there certainly was a curious sound. To my ear, it sounded like the smashing of glass. "I wonder if there is anything fragile inside your precious puzzle, Pugh, and, if so, if we are shivering it by degrees?"

II

"WHAT *is* that noise?"

I lay in bed in that curious condition which is between sleep and waking. When, at last, I *knew* that I was awake, I asked myself what it was that had woke me. Suddenly I became conscious that something was making itself audible in the silence of the night. For some seconds I lay and listened. Then I sat up in bed.

"What *is* that noise?"

It was like the tick, tick of some large and unusually clear-toned clock. It might have been a clock, had it not been that the sound was varied, every half dozen ticks or so, by a sort of stifled screech, such as might have been uttered by some small creature in an extremity of anguish. I got out of bed; it was ridiculous to think of sleep during the continuation of that uncanny shrieking. I struck a light. The sound seemed to come from the neighborhood of my dressing-table. I went to the dressing-table, the lighted match in my hand, and, as I did so, my eyes fell on Pugh's mysterious box. That same instant there issued, from the bowels of the box, a more uncomfortable screech than any I had previously heard. It took me so completely by surprise that I let the match fall from my hand to the floor. The room was in darkness. I stood, I will not say trembling, listening—considering their volume—to the *eeriest* shrieks I ever heard. All at once they ceased. Then came the tick, tick, tick again. I struck another match and lit the gas.

Pugh had left his puzzle box behind him. We had done all we could, together, to solve the puzzle. He had left it behind to see what I could do with it alone. So much had it engrossed my attention that I had even brought it into my bedroom, in order that I might, before retiring to rest, make a final attempt at the solution of the mystery. *Now* what possessed the thing?

As I stood, and looked, and listened, one thing began

to be clear to me, that some sort of machinery had been set in motion inside the box. How it had been set in motion was another matter. But the box had been subjected to so much handling, to such pressing and such hammering, that it was not strange if, after all, Pugh or I had unconsciously hit upon the spring which set the whole thing going. Possibly the mechanism had got so rusty that it had refused to act at once. It had hung fire, and only after some hours had something or other set the imprisoned motive power free.

But what about the screeching? Could there be some living creature concealed within the box? Was I listening to the cries of some small animal in agony ? Momentary reflection suggested that the explanation of the one thing was the explanation of the other. Rust!—there was the mystery. The same rust which had prevented the mechanism from acting at once was causing the screeching now. The uncanny sounds were caused by nothing more nor less than the want of a drop or two of oil. Such an explanation would not have satisfied Pugh, it satisfied me.

Picking up the box, I placed it to my ear.

"I wonder how long this little performance is going to continue. And what is going to happen when it is good enough to cease? I hope"—an uncomfortable thought occurred to me—"I hope Pugh hasn't picked up some pleasant little novelty in the way of an infernal machine. It would be a first-rate joke if he and I had been endeavoring to solve the puzzle of how to set it going."

I don't mind owning that as this reflection crossed my mind I replaced Pugh's puzzle on the dressing-table. The idea did not commend itself to me at all. The box evidently contained some curious mechanism. It might be more curious than comfortable. Possibly some agreeable little device in clockwork. The tick, tick, tick suggested clockwork which had been planned to go a certain time, and then—then, for all I knew, ignite an explosive, and—blow up. It would be a charming solution to the puzzle

if it were to explode while I stood there, in my night-shirt, looking on. It is true that the box weighed very little. Probably, as I have said, the whole affair would not have turned the scale at a couple of ounces. But then its very lightness might have been part of the ingenious inventor's little game. There are explosives with which one can work a very satisfactory amount of damage with considerably less than a couple of ounces.

While I was hesitating—I own it!—whether I had not better immerse Pugh's puzzle in a can of water, or throw it out of the window, or call down Bob with a request to at once remove it to his apartment, both the tick, tick, tick, and the screeching ceased, and all within the box was still. If it *was* going to explode, it was now or never. Instinctively I moved in the direction of the door.

I waited with a certain sense of anxiety. I waited in vain. Nothing happened, not even a renewal of the sound.

"I wish Pugh had kept his precious puzzle at home. This sort of thing tries one's nerves."

When I thought that I perceived that nothing seemed likely to happen, I returned to the neighborhood of the table. I looked at the box askance. I took it up gingerly. Something might go off at any moment for all I knew. It would be too much of a joke if Pugh's precious puzzle exploded in my hand. I shook it doubtfully; nothing rattled. I held it to my ear. There was not a sound. What had taken place? Had the clockwork run down, and was the machine arranged with such a diabolical ingenuity that a certain interval was required, after the clockwork had run down, before an explosion could occur? Or had rust caused the mechanism to again hang fire?

"After making all that commotion the thing might at least come open." I banged the box viciously against the corner of the table. I felt that I would almost rather that an explosion should take place than that nothing should occur. One does not care to be disturbed from one's sound slumber in the small hours of the morning for a trifle.

"I've half a mind to get a hammer, and try, as they say in the cookery books, another way."

Unfortunately I had promised Pugh to abstain from using force. I might have shivered the box open with my hammer, and then explained that it had fallen, or got trod upon, or sat upon, or something, and so got shattered, only I was afraid that Pugh would not believe me. The man is himself such an untruthful man that he is in a chronic state of suspicion about the truthfulness of others.

"Well, if you're not going to blow up, or open, or something, I'll say good night."

I gave the box a final rap with my knuckles and a final shake, replaced it on the table, put out the gas, and returned to bed.

I was just sinking again into slumber, when that box began again. It was true that Pugh had purchased the puzzle, but it was evident that the whole enjoyment of the purchase was destined to be mine. It was useless to think of sleep while that performance was going on. I sat up in bed once more.

"It strikes me that the puzzle consists in finding out how it is possible to go to sleep with Pugh's purchase in your bedroom. This is far better than the old-fashioned prescription of cats on the tiles."

It struck me the noise was distinctly louder than before; this applied both to the tick, tick, tick, and the screeching.

"Possibly," I told myself, as I relighted the gas, "the explosion is to come off this time."

I turned to look at the box. There could be no doubt about it; the noise was louder. And, if I could trust my eyes, the box was moving—giving a series of little jumps. This might have been an optical delusion, but it seemed to me that at each tick the box gave a little bound. During the screeches—which sounded more like the cries of an animal in an agony of pain even than before—if it did not tilt itself first on one end, and then on another, I shall never be willing to trust the evidence of my own eyes again. And surely the box had increased in size; I could

have sworn not only that it had increased, but that it was increasing, even as I stood there looking on. It had grown, and still was growing, both broader, and longer, and deeper. Pugh, of course, would have attributed it to supernatural agency; there never was a man with such a nose for a ghost. I could picture him occupying my position, shivering in his nightshirt, as he beheld that miracle taking place before his eyes. The solution which at once suggested itself to me—and which would *never* have suggested itself to Pugh!—was that the box was fashioned, as it were, in layers, and that the ingenious mechanism it contained was forcing the sides at once both upward and outward. I took it in my hand. I could feel something striking against the bottom of the box, like the tap, tap, tapping of a tiny hammer.

"This is a pretty puzzle of Pugh's. He would say that that is the tapping of a deathwatch. For my part I have not much faith in deathwatches, *et hoc genus omne*, but it certainly is a curious tapping; I wonder what is going to happen next?"

Apparently nothing, except a continuation of those mysterious sounds. That the box had increased in size I had, and have, no doubt whatever. I should say that it had increased a good inch in every direction, at least half an inch while I had been looking on. But while I stood looking its growth was suddenly and perceptibly stayed; it ceased to move. Only the noise continued.

"I wonder how long it will be before anything worth happening does happen! I suppose something is going to happen; there can't be all this to-do for nothing. If it is anything in the infernal machine line, and there is going to be an explosion, I might as well be here to see it. I think I'll have a pipe."

I put on my dressing-gown. I lit my pipe. I sat and stared at the box. I dare say I sat there for quite twenty minutes when, as before, without any sort of warning, the sound was stilled. Its sudden cessation rather startled me.

"Has the mechanism again hung fire? Or, this time, is

the explosion coming off?" It did not come off; nothing came off. "Isn't the box even going to open?"

It did not open. There was simply silence all at once, and that was all. I sat there in expectation for some moments longer. But I sat for nothing. I rose. I took the box in my hand. I shook it.

"This puzzle *is* a puzzle." I held the box first to one ear, then to the other. I gave it several sharp raps with my knuckles. There was not an answering sound, not even the sort of reverberation which Pugh and I had noticed at first. It seemed hollower than ever. It was as though the soul of the box was dead. "I suppose if I put you down, and extinguish the gas and return to bed, in about half an hour or so, just as I am dropping off to sleep, the performance will be recommenced. Perhaps the third time will be lucky."

But I was mistaken—there was no third time. When I returned to bed that time I returned to sleep, and I was allowed to sleep; there was no continuation of the performance, at least so far as I know. For no sooner was I once more between the sheets than I was seized with an irresistible drowsiness, a drowsiness which so mastered me that I—I imagine it must have been instantly—sank into slumber which lasted till long after day had dawned. Whether or not any more mysterious sounds issued from the bowels of Pugh's puzzle is more than I can tell. If they did, they did not succeed in rousing me.

And yet, when at last I did awake, I had a sort of consciousness that my waking had been caused by something strange. What it was I could not surmise. My own impression was that I had been awakened by the touch of a person's hand. But that impression must have been a mistaken one, because, as I could easily see by looking round the room, there was no one in the room to touch me.

It was broad daylight. I looked at my watch; it was nearly eleven o'clock. I am a pretty late sleeper as a rule, but I do not usually sleep as late as that. That scoundrel Bob would let me sleep all day without thinking it neces-

sary to call me. I was just about to spring out of bed with the intention of ringing the bell so that I might give Bob a piece of my mind for allowing me to sleep so late, when my glance fell on the dressing-table on which, the night before, I had placed Pugh's puzzle. It had gone!

Its absence so took me by surprise that I ran to the table. It *had* gone. But it had not gone far; it had gone to pieces! There were the pieces lying where the box had been. The puzzle had solved itself. The box was open, open with a vengeance, one might say. Like that unfortunate Humpty Dumpty, who, so the chroniclers tell us, sat on a wall, surely "all the king's horses and all the king's men" never could put Pugh's puzzle together again!

The marquetry had resolved itself into its component parts. How those parts had ever been joined was a mystery. They had been laid upon no foundation, as is the case with ordinary inlaid work. The several pieces of wood were not only of different shapes and sizes, but they were as thin as the thinnest veneer; yet the box had been formed by simply joining them together. The man who made that box must have been possessed of ingenuity worthy of a better cause.

I perceived how the puzzle had been worked. The box had contained an arrangement of springs, which, on being released, had expanded themselves in different directions until their mere expansion had rent the box to pieces. There were the springs, lying amid the ruin they had caused.

There was something else amid that ruin besides those springs; there was a small piece of writing paper. I took it up. On the reverse side of it was written in a minute, crabbed hand: "A Present For You." What was a present for me? I looked, and, not for the first time since I had caught sight of Pugh's precious puzzle, could scarcely believe my eyes.

There, poised between two upright wires, the bent ends of which held it aloft in the air, was either a piece of glass

or—a crystal. The scrap of writing paper had exactly covered it. I understood what it was, when Pugh and I had tapped with the hammer, had caused the answering taps to proceed from within. Our taps caused the wires to oscillate, and in these oscillations the crystal, which they held suspended, had touched the side of the box.

I looked again at the piece of paper. "A Present For You." Was *this* the present—this crystal? I regarded it intently.

"It *can't* be a diamond."

The idea was ridiculous, absurd. No man in his senses would place a diamond inside a twopenny-halfpenny puzzle box. The thing was as big as a walnut! And yet—I am a pretty good judge of precious stones—if it was not an uncut diamond it was the best imitation I had seen. I took it up. I examined it closely. The more closely I examined it, the more my wonder grew.

"It *is* a diamond!"

And yet the idea was too preposterous for credence. Who would present a diamond as big as a walnut with a trumpery puzzle? Besides, all the diamonds which the world contains of that size are almost as well known as the Koh-i-noor.

"If it is a diamond, it is worth—it is worth—Heaven only knows what it isn't worth if it's a diamond."

I regarded it through a strong pocket lens. As I did so I could not restrain an exclamation.

"The world to a China orange, it *is* a diamond!"

The words had scarcely escaped my lips than there came a tapping at the door.

"Come in!" I cried, supposing it was Bob. It was not Bob, it was Pugh. Instinctively I put the lens and the crystal behind my back. At sight of me in my nightshirt Pugh began to shake his head.

"What hours, Tress, what hours! Why, my dear Tress, I've breakfasted, read the papers and my letters, came all the way from my house here, and you're not up!"

"Don't I look as though I were up?"

"Ah, Tress! Tress!" He approached the dressing-table. His eye fell upon the ruins. "What's this?"

"That's the solution to the puzzle."

"Have you—have you solved it fairly, Tress?"

"It has solved itself. Our handling, and tapping, and hammering must have freed the springs which the box contained, and during the night, while I slept, they have caused it to come open."

"While you slept? Dear me! How strange! And—what are these?"

He had discovered the two upright wires on which the crystal had been poised.

"I suppose they're part of the puzzle."

"And was there anything in the box? What's this?" He picked up the scrap of paper; I had left it on the table. He read what was written on it: "'A Present For You.' What's it mean? Tress, was this in the box?"

"It was."

"What's it mean about a present? Was there anything in the box besides?"

"Pugh, if you will leave the room I shall be able to dress; I am not in the habit of receiving quite such early calls, or I should have been prepared to receive you. If you will wait in the next room, I will be with you as soon as I'm dressed. There is a little subject in connection with the box which I wish to discuss with you."

"A subject in connection with the box? What is the subject?"

"I will tell you, Pugh, when I have performed my toilet."

"Why can't you tell me now?"

"Do you propose, then, that I should stand here shivering in my shirt while you are prosing at your ease? Thank you; I am obliged, but I decline. May I ask you once more, Pugh, to wait for me in the adjoining apartment?"

He moved toward the door. When he had taken a couple of steps, he halted.

"I—I hope, Tress, that you're—you're going to play no tricks on me?"

"Tricks on you! Is it likely that I am going to play tricks upon my oldest friend?"

When he had gone—he vanished, it seemed to me, with a somewhat doubtful visage—I took the crystal to the window. I drew the blind. I let the sunshine fall on it. I examined it again, closely and minutely, with the aid of my pocket lens. It *was* a diamond; there could not be a doubt of it. If, with my knowledge of stones, I was deceived, then I was deceived as never man had been deceived before. My heart beat faster as I recognized the fact that I was holding in my hand what was, in all probability, a fortune for a man of moderate desires. Of course, Pugh knew nothing of what I had discovered, and there was no reason why he should know. Not the least! The only difficulty was that if I kept my own counsel, and sold the stone and utilized the proceeds of the sale, I should have to invent a story which would account for my sudden accession to fortune. Pugh knows almost as much of my affairs as I do myself. That is the worst of these old friends!

When I joined Pugh I found him dancing up and down the floor like a bear upon hot plates. He scarcely allowed me to put my nose inside the door before attacking me.

"Tress, give me what was in the box."

"My dear Pugh, how do you know that there was something in the box to give you?"

"I know there was!"

"Indeed! If you know that there was something in the box, perhaps you will tell me what that something was."

He eyed me doubtfully. Then, advancing, he laid upon my arm a hand which positively trembled.

"Tress, you—you wouldn't play tricks on an old friend."

"You are right, Pugh, I wouldn't, though I believe there have been occasions on which you have had doubts upon the subject. By the way, Pugh, I believe that I am the oldest friend you have."

"I—I don't know about that. There's—there's Brasher."

"Brasher! Who's Brasher? You wouldn't compare my

friendship to the friendship of such a man as Brasher? Think of the tastes we have in common, you and I. We're both collectors."

"Ye-es, we're both collectors."

"I make my interests yours, and you make your interests mine. Isn't that so, Pugh?"

"Tress, what—what was in the box?"

"I will be frank with you, Pugh. If there had been something in the box, would you have been willing to go halves with me in my discovery?"

"Go halves! In your discovery, Tress! Give me what is mine!"

"With pleasure, Pugh, if you will tell me what is yours."

"If—if you don't give me what was in the box I'll—I'll send for the police."

"Do! Then I shall be able to hand to them what was in the box in order that it may be restored to its proper owner."

"Its proper owner! I'm its proper owner!"

"Excuse me, but I don't understand how that can be; at least, until the police have made inquiries. I should say that the proper owner was the person from whom you purchased the box, or, more probably, the person from whom he purchased it, and by whom, doubtless, it was sold in ignorance, or by mistake. Thus, Pugh, if you will only send for the police, we shall earn the gratitude of a person of whom we never heard in our lives—I for discovering the contents of the box, and you for returning them."

As I said this, Pugh's face was a study. He gasped for breath. He actually took out his handkerchief to wipe his brow.

"Tress, I—I don't think you need to use a tone like that to me. It isn't friendly. What—what was in the box?"

"Let us understand each other, Pugh. If you don't hand over what was in the box to the police, I go halves."

Pugh began to dance about the floor.

"What a fool I was to trust you with the box! I knew

I couldn't trust you." I said nothing. I turned and rang the bell. "What's that for?"

"That, my dear Pugh, is for breakfast, and, if you desire it, for the police. You know, although you have breakfasted, I haven't. Perhaps while I am breaking my fast, you would like to summon the representatives of law and order." Bob came in. I ordered breakfast. Then I turned to Pugh. "Is there anything you would like?"

"No, I—I've breakfasted."

"It wasn't of breakfast I was thinking. It was of—something else. Bob is at your service, if, for instance, you wish to send him on an errand."

"No, I want nothing. Bob can go." Bob went. Directly he was gone, Pugh turned to me. "You shall have half. What was in the box?"

"I shall have half?"

"You shall!"

"I don't think it is necessary that the terms of our little understanding should be expressly embodied in black and white. I fancy that, under the circumstance, I can trust you, Pugh. I believe that I am capable of seeing that, in this matter, you don't do me. That was in the box."

I held out the crystal between my finger and thumb.

"What is it?"

"That is what I desire to learn."

"Let me look at it."

"You are welcome to look at it where it is. Look at it as long as you like, and as closely."

Pugh leaned over my hand. His eyes began to gleam. He is himself not a bad judge of precious stones, is Pugh.

"It's—it's—Tress!—is it a diamond?"

"That question I have already asked myself."

"Let me look at it! It will be safe with me! It's mine!"

I immediately put the thing behind my back.

"Pardon me, it belongs neither to you nor to me. It belongs, in all probability, to the person who sold that puzzle to the man from whom you bought it—perhaps some weeping widow, Pugh, or hopeless orphan—think of it. Let us

have no further misunderstanding upon that point, my dear old friend. Still, because you are my dear old friend, I am willing to trust you with this discovery of mine, on condition that you don't attempt to remove it from my sight, and that you return it to me the moment I require you."

"You're—you're very hard on me." I made a movement toward my waistcoat pocket. "I'll return it to you!"

I handed him the crystal, and with it I handed him my pocket lens.

"With the aid of that glass I imagine that you will be able to subject it to a more acute examination, Pugh."

He began to examine it through the lens. Directly he did so, he gave an exclamation. In a few moments he looked up at me. His eyes were glistening behind his spectacles. I could see he trembled.

"Tress, it's—it's a diamond, a Brazil diamond. It's worth a fortune!"

"I'm glad you think so."

"Glad I think so! Don't you think that it's a diamond?"

"It appears to be a diamond. Under ordinary conditions I should say, without hesitation, that it was a diamond. But when I consider the circumstances of its discovery, I am driven to doubts. How much did you give for that puzzle, Pugh?"

"Ninepence; the fellow wanted a shilling, but I gave him ninepence. He seemed content."

"Ninepence! Does it seem reasonable that we should find a diamond, which, if it is a diamond, is the finest stone I ever saw and handled, in a ninepenny puzzle? It is not as though it had got into the thing by accident, it had evidently been placed there to be found, and, apparently, by anyone who chanced to solve the puzzle; witness the writing on the scrap of paper."

Pugh reëxamined the crystal.

"It is a diamond! I'll stake my life that it's a diamond!"

"Still, though it be a diamond, I smell a rat!"

"What do you mean?"

"I strongly suspect that the person who placed that diamond inside that puzzle intended to have a joke at the expense of the person who discovered it. What was to be the nature of the joke is more than I can say at present, but I should like to have a bet with you that the man who compounded that puzzle was an ingenious practical joker. I may be wrong, Pugh; we shall see. But, until I have proved the contrary, I don't believe that the maddest man that ever lived would throw away a diamond worth, apparently, shall we say a thousand pounds?"

"A thousand pounds! This diamond is worth a good deal more than a thousand pounds."

"Well, that only makes my case the stronger; I don't believe that the maddest man that ever lived would throw away a diamond worth more than a thousand pounds with such utter wantonness as seems to have characterized the action of the original owner of the stone which I found in your ninepenny puzzle, Pugh."

"There have been some eccentric characters in the world, some very eccentric characters. However, as you say, we shall see. I fancy that I know somebody who would be quite willing to have such a diamond as this, and who, moreover, would be willing to pay a fair price for its possession; I will take it to him and see what he says."

"Pugh, hand me back that diamond."

"My dear Tress, I was only going——"

Bob came in with the breakfast tray.

"Pugh, you will either hand me that at once, or Bob shall summon the representatives of law and order."

He handed me the diamond. I sat down to breakfast with a hearty appetite. Pugh stood and scowled at me.

"Joseph Tress, it is my solemn conviction, and I have no hesitation in saying so in plain English, that you're a thief."

"My dear Pugh, it seems to me that we show every promise of becoming a couple of thieves."

"Don't bracket me with you!"

"Not at all, you are worse than I. It is you who decline

to return the contents of the box to its proper owner. Put it to yourself, you have *some* common sense, my dear old friend!—do you suppose that a diamond worth more than a thousand pounds is to be *honestly* bought for ninepence?"

He resumed his old trick of dancing about the room.

"I was a fool ever to let you have the box! I ought to have known better than to have trusted you; goodness knows you have given me sufficient cause to mistrust you! Over and over again! Your character is only too notorious! You have plundered friend and foe alike—friend and foe alike! As for the rubbish which you call your collection, nine tenths of it, I know as a positive fact, you have stolen out and out."

"Who stole my Sir Walter Raleigh pipe? Wasn't it a man named Pugh?"

"Look here, Joseph Tress!"

"I'm looking."

"Oh, it's no good talking to you, not the least! You're —you're dead to all the promptings of conscience! May I inquire, Mr. Tress, what it is you propose to do?"

"I *propose* to do nothing, except summon the representatives of law and order. Failing that, my dear Pugh, I had some faint, vague, very vague idea of taking the contents of your ninepenny puzzle to a certain firm in Hatton Garden, who are dealers in precious stones, and to learn from them if they are disposed to give anything for it, and if so, what."

"I shall come with you."

"With pleasure, on condition that you pay the cab."

"I pay the cab! I will pay half."

"Not at all. You will either pay the whole fare, or else I will have one cab and you shall have another. It is a three-shilling cab fare from here to Hatton Garden. If you propose to share my cab, you will be so good as to hand over that three shillings before we start."

He gasped, but he handed over the three shillings. There are few things I enjoy so much as getting money out of Pugh!

On the road to Hatton Garden we wrangled nearly all the way. I own that I feel a certain satisfaction in irritating Pugh, he is such an irritable man. He wanted to know what I thought we should get for the diamond.

"You can't expect to get much for the contents of a ninepenny puzzle, not even the price of a cab fare, Pugh."

He eyed me, but for some minutes he was silent. Then he began again.

"Tress, I don't think we ought to let it go for less than —than five thousand pounds."

"Seriously, Pugh, I doubt whether, when the whole affair is ended, we shall get five thousand pence for it, or, for the matter of that, five thousand farthings."

"But why not? Why not? It's a magnificent stone—magnificent! I'll stake my life on it."

I tapped my breast with the tips of my fingers.

"There's a warning voice within my breast that ought to be in yours, Pugh! Something tells me, perhaps it is the unusually strong vein of common sense which I possess, that the contents of your ninepenny puzzle will be found to be a magnificent do—an ingenious practical joke, my friend."

"I don't believe it."

But I think he did; at any rate, I had unsettled the foundations of his faith.

We entered the Hatton Garden office side by side; in his anxiety not to let me get before him, Pugh actually clung to my arm. The office was divided into two parts by a counter which ran from wall to wall. I advanced to a man who stood on the other side of this counter.

"I want to sell you a diamond."

"*We* want to sell you a diamond," interpolated Pugh.

I turned to Pugh. I "fixed" him with my glance.

"*I* want to sell you a diamond. Here it is. What will you give me for it?"

Taking the crystal from my waistcoat pocket I handed it to the man on the other side of the counter. Directly

he got it between his fingers, and saw that it was that he had got, I noticed a sudden gleam come into his eyes.

"This is—this is rather a fine stone."

Pugh nudged my arm.

"I told you so." I paid no attention to Pugh. "What will you give me for it?"

"Do you mean, what will I give you for it cash down upon the nail?"

"Just so—what will you give me for it cash down upon the nail?"

The man turned the crystal over and over in his fingers.

"Well, that's rather a large order. We don't often get a chance of buying such a stone as this across the counter. What do you say to—well—to ten thousand pounds?"

Ten thousand pounds! It was beyond my wildest imaginings. Pugh gasped. He lurched against the counter.

"Ten thousand pounds!" he echoed.

The man on the other side glanced at him, I thought, a little curiously.

"If you can give me references, or satisfy me in any way as to your *bona fides*, I am prepared to give you for this diamond an open check for ten thousand pounds, or if you prefer it, the cash instead."

I stared; I was not accustomed to see business transacted on quite such lines as those.

"We'll take it," murmured Pugh; I believe he was too much overcome by his feelings to do more than murmur. I interposed.

"My dear sir, you will excuse my saying that you arrive very rapidly at your conclusions. In the first place, how can you make sure that it is a diamond?"

The man behind the counter smiled.

"I should be very ill-fitted for the position which I hold if I could not tell a diamond directly I get a sight of it, especially such a stone as this."

"But have you no tests you can apply?"

"We have tests which we apply in cases in which doubt exists, but in this case there is no doubt whatever. I am

as sure that this is a diamond as I am sure that it is air I breathe. However, here is a test."

There was a wheel close by the speaker. It was worked by a treadle. It was more like a superior sort of traveling-tinker's grindstone than anything else. The man behind the counter put his foot upon the treadle. The wheel began to revolve. He brought the crystal into contact with the swiftly revolving wheel. There was a s—s—sh! And, in an instant, his hand was empty; the crystal had vanished into air.

"Good heavens!" he gasped. I never saw such a look of amazement on a human countenance before. "It's splintered!"

POSTSCRIPT

It *was* a diamond, although it *had* splintered. In that fact lay the point of the joke. The man behind the counter had not been wrong; examination of such dust as could be collected proved that fact beyond a doubt. It was declared by experts that the diamond, at some period of its history, had been subjected to intense and continuing heat. The result had been to make it as brittle as glass.

There could be no doubt that its original owner had been an expert too. He knew where he got it from, and he probably knew what it had endured. He was aware that, from a mercantile point of view, it was worthless; it could never have been cut. So, having a turn for humor of a peculiar kind, he had devoted days, and weeks, and possibly months, to the construction of that puzzle. He had placed the diamond inside, and he had enjoyed, in anticipation and in imagination, the Alnaschar visions of the lucky finder.

Pugh blamed me for the catastrophe. He said, and still says, that if I had not, in a measure, and quite gratuitously, insisted on a test, the man behind the counter would have been satisfied with the evidence of his organs of vision, and we should have been richer by ten thousand pounds.

But I satisfy my conscience with the reflection that what I did at any rate was honest, though, at the same time, I am perfectly well aware that such a reflection gives Pugh no sort of satisfaction.

The Great Valdez Sapphire

I KNOW more about it than anyone else in the world, its present owner not excepted. I can give its whole history, from the Cingalese who found it, the Spanish adventurer who stole it, the cardinal who bought it, the Pope who graciously accepted it, the favored son of the Church who received it, the gay and giddy duchess who pawned it, down to the eminent prelate who now holds it in trust as a family heirloom.

It will occupy a chapter to itself in my forthcoming work on "Historic Stones," where full details of its weight, size, color, and value may be found. At present I am going to relate an incident in its history which, for obvious reasons, will not be published—which, in fact, I trust the reader will consider related in strict confidence.

I had never seen the stone itself when I began to write about it, and it was not till one evening last spring, while staying with my nephew, Sir Thomas Acton, that I came within measurable distance of it. A dinner party was impending, and, at my instigation, the Bishop of Northchurch and Miss Panton, his daughter and heiress, were among the invited guests.

The dinner was a particularly good one, I remember that distinctly. In fact, I felt myself partly responsible for it, having engaged the new cook—a talented young Italian, pupil of the admirable old *chef* at my club. We had gone over the *menu* carefully together, with a result refreshing in its novelty, but not so daring as to disturb the minds of the innocent country guests who were bidden thereto.

The first spoonful of soup was reassuring, and I looked

to the end of the table to exchange a congratulatory glance with Leta. What was amiss? No response. Her pretty face was flushed, her smile constrained, she was talking with quite unnecessary *empressement* to her neighbor, Sir Harry Landor, though Leta is one of those few women who understand the importance of letting a man settle down tranquilly and with an undisturbed mind to the business of dining, allowing no topic of serious interest to come on before the *relevés*, and reserving mere conversational brilliancy for the *entremets*.

Guests all right? No disappointments? I had gone through the list with her, selecting just the right people to be asked to meet the Landors, our new neighbors. Not a mere cumbrous county gathering, nor yet a showy imported party from town, but a skillful blending of both. Had anything happened already? I had been late for dinner and missed the arrivals in the drawing-room. It was Leta's fault. She has got into a way of coming into my room and putting the last touches to my toilet. I let her, for I am doubtful of myself nowadays after many years' dependence on the best of valets. Her taste is generally beyond dispute, but to-day she had indulged in a feminine vagary that provoked me and made me late for dinner.

"Are you going to wear your sapphire, Uncle Paul!" she cried in a tone of dismay. "Oh, why not the ruby?"

"You *would* have your way about the table decorations," I gently reminded her. "With that service of Crown Derby *repoussé* and orchids, the ruby would look absolutely barbaric. Now if you would have had the Limoges set, white candles, and a yellow silk center——"

"Oh, but—I'm *so* disappointed—I wanted the bishop to see your ruby—or one of your engraved gems——"

"My dear, it is on the bishop's account I put this on. You know his daughter is heiress of the great Valdez sapphire——"

"Of course she is, and when he has the charge of a stone three times as big as yours, what's the use of wearing it? The ruby, dear Uncle Paul, *please*!"

She was desperately in earnest I could see, and considering the obligations which I am supposed to be under to her and Tom, it was but a little matter to yield, but it involved a good deal of extra trouble. Studs, sleeve-links, watch-guard, all carefully selected to go with the sapphire, had to be changed, the emerald which I chose as a compromise requiring more florid accompaniments of a deeper tone of gold; and the dinner hour struck as I replaced my jewel case, the one relic left me of a once handsome fortune, in my fireproof safe.

The emerald looked very well that evening, however. I kept my eyes upon it for comfort when Miss Panton proved trying.

She was a lean, yellow, dictatorial young person with no conversation. I spoke of her father's celebrated sapphires. "*My* sapphires," she amended sourly; "though I am legally debarred from making any profitable use of them." She furthermore informed me that she viewed them as useless gauds, which ought to be disposed of for the benefit of the heathen. I gave the subject up, and while she discoursed of the work of the Blue Ribbon Army among the Bosjesmans I tried to understand a certain dislocation in the arrangement of the table. Surely we were more or less in number than we should be? Opposite side all right. Who was extra on ours? I leaned forward. Lady Landor on one side of Tom, on the other who? I caught glimpses of plumes pink and green nodding over a dinner plate, and beneath them a pink nose in a green visage with a nutcracker chin altogether unknown to me. A sharp gray eye shot a sideway glance down the table and caught me peeping, and I retreated, having only marked in addition two clawlike hands, with pointed ruffles and a mass of brilliant rings, making good play with a knife and fork. Who was she? At intervals a high acid voice could be heard addressing Tom, and a laugh that made me shudder; it had the quality of the scream of a bird of prey or the yell of a jackal. I had heard that sort of laugh before, and it always made me feel like a defenseless rabbit

Every time it sounded I saw Leta's fan flutter more furiously and her manner grow more nervously animated. Poor dear girl! I never in all my recollection wished a dinner at an end so earnestly so as to assure her of my support and sympathy, though without the faintest conception why either should be required.

The ices at last. A *menu* card folded in two was laid beside me. I read it unobserved. "Keep the B. from joining us in the drawing-room." The B.? The bishop, of course. With pleasure. But why? And how? *That's* the question, never mind "why." Could I lure him into the library—the billiard room—the conservatory? I doubted it, and I doubted still more what I should do with him when I got him there.

The bishop is a grand and stately ecclesiastic of the mediæval type, broad-chested, deep-voiced, martial of bearing. I could picture him charging mace in hand at the head of his vassals, or delivering over a dissenter of the period to the rack and thumbscrew, but not pottering among rare editions, tall copies and Grolier bindings, nor condescending to a quiet cigar among the tree ferns and orchids. Leta must and should be obeyed, I swore, nevertheless, even if I were driven to lock the door in the fearless old fashion of a bygone day, and declare I'd shoot any man who left while a drop remained in the bottles.

The ladies were rising. The lady at the head of the line smirked and nodded her pink plumes coquettishly at Tom, while her hawk's eyes roved keen and predatory over us all. She stopped suddenly, creating a block and confusion.

"Ah, the dear bishop! *You* there, and I never saw you! You must come and have a nice long chat presently. By-by—!" She shook her fan at him over my shoulder and tripped off. Leta, passing me last, gave me a look of profound despair.

"Lady Carwitchet!" somebody exclaimed. "I couldn't believe my eyes."

"Thought she was dead or in penal servitude. Never

should have expected to see her *here*," said some one else behind me confidentially.

"What Carwitchet? Not the mother of the Carwitchet who——"

"Just so. The Carwitchet who—" Tom assented with a shrug. "We needn't go farther, as she's my guest. Just my luck. I met them at Buxton, thought them uncommonly good company—in fact, Carwitchet laid me under a great obligation about a horse I was nearly let in for buying—and gave them a general invitation here, as one does, you know. Never expected her to turn up with her luggage this afternoon just before dinner, to stay a week, or a fortnight if Carwitchet can join her." A groan of sympathy ran round the table. "It can't be helped. I've told you this just to show that I shouldn't have asked you here to meet this sort of people of my own free will; but, as it is, please say no more about them." The subject was not dropped by any means, and I took care that it should not be. At our end of the table one story after another went buzzing round—*sotto voce*, out of deference to Tom—but perfectly audible.

"Carwitchet? Ah, yes. Mixed up in that Rawlings divorce case, wasn't he? A bad lot. Turned out of the Dragoon Guards for cheating at cards, or picking pockets, or something—remember the row at the Cerulean Club? Scandalous exposure—and that forged letter business—oh, that was the mother—prosecution hushed up somehow. Ought to be serving her fourteen years—and that business of poor Farrars, the banker—got hold of some of his secrets and blackmailed him till he blew his brains out——"

It was so exciting that I clean forgot the bishop, till a low gasp at my elbow startled me. He was lying back in his chair, his mighty shaven jowl a ghastly white, his fierce imperious eyebrows drooping limp over his fishlike eyes, his splendid figure shrunk and contracted. He was trying with a shaken hand to pour out wine. The decanter clattered against the glass and the wine spilled on the cloth.

"I'm afraid you find the room too warm. Shall we go into the library?"

He rose hastily and followed me like a lamb.

He recovered himself once we got into the hall, and affably rejected all my proffers of brandy and soda—medical advice—everything else my limited experience could suggest. He only demanded his carriage "directly" and that Miss Panton should be summoned forthwith.

I made the best use I could of the time left me.

"I'm uncommonly sorry you do not feel equal to staying a little longer, my lord. I counted on showing you my few trifles of precious stones, the salvage from the wreck of my possessions. Nothing in comparison with your own collection."

The bishop clasped his hand over his heart. His breath came short and quick.

"A return of that dizziness," he explained with a faint smile. "You are thinking of the Valdez sapphire, are you not? Some day," he went on with forced composure, "I may have the pleasure of showing it to you. It is at my banker's just now."

Miss Panton's steps were heard in the hall. "You are well known as a connoisseur, Mr. Acton," he went on hurriedly. "Is your collection valuable? If so, *keep it safe; don't trust a ring off your hand, or the key of your jewel case out of your pocket till the house is clear again.*" The words rushed from his lips in an impetuous whisper, he gave me a meaning glance, and departed with his daughter. I went back to the drawing-room, my head swimming with bewilderment.

"What! The dear bishop gone!" screamed Lady Carwitchet from the central ottoman where she sat, surrounded by most of the gentlemen, all apparently well entertained by her conversation. "And I wanted to talk over old times with him so badly. His poor wife was my greatest friend. Mira Montanaro, daughter of the great banker, you know. It's not possible that that miserable little prig is my poor Mira's girl. The heiress of all the Montanaros in a black

lace gown worth twopence! When I think of her mother's beauty and her toilets! Does she ever wear the sapphires? Has anyone ever seen her in them? Eleven large stones in a lovely antique setting, and the great Valdez sapphire —worth thousands and thousands—for the pendant." No one replied. "I wanted to get a rise out of the bishop to-night. It used to make him so mad when I wore this."

She fumbled among the laces at her throat, and clawed out a pendant that hung to a velvet band around her neck. I fairly gasped when she removed her hand. A sapphire of irregular shape flashed out its blue lightning on us. Such a stone! A true, rich, cornflower blue even by that wretched artificial light, with soft velvety depths of color and dazzling clearness of tint in its lights and shades—a stone to remember! I stretched out my hand involuntarily, but Lady Carwitchet drew back with a coquettish squeal. "No! no! You mustn't look any closer. Tell me what you think of it now. Isn't it pretty?"

"Superb!" was all I could ejaculate, staring at the azure splendor of that miraculous jewel in a sort of trance.

She gave a shrill cackling laugh of mockery.

"The great Mr. Acton taken in by a bit of Palais Royal gimcrackery! What an advertisement for Bogaerts et Cie! They are perfect artists in frauds. Don't you remember their stand at the first Paris Exhibition? They had imitations there of every celebrated stone; but I never expected anything made by man could delude Mr. Acton, never!" And she went off into another mocking cackle, and all the idiots round her haw-hawed knowingly, as if they had seen the joke all along. I was too bewildered to reply, which was on the whole lucky. "I suppose I mustn't tell why I came to give quite a big sum in francs for this?" she went on, tapping her closed lips with her closed fan, and cocking her eye at us all like a parrot wanting to be coaxed to talk. "It's a queer story."

I didn't want to hear her anecdote, especially as I saw she wanted to tell it. What I *did* want was to see that pendant

again. She had thrust it back among her laces, only the loop which held it to the velvet being visible. It was set with three small sapphires, and even from a distance I clearly made them out to be imitations, and poor ones. I felt a queer thrill of self-mistrust. Was the large stone no better? Could I, even for an instant, have been dazzled by a sham, and a sham of that quality? The events of the evening had flurried and confused me. I wished to think them over in quiet. I would go to bed.

My rooms at the Manor are the best in the house. Leta will have it so. I must explain their position for a reason to be understood later. My bedroom is in the southeast angle of the house; it opens on one side into a sitting-room in the east corridor, the rest of which is taken up by the suite of rooms occupied by Tom and Leta; and on the other side into my bathroom, the first room in the south corridor, where the principal guest chambers are, to one of which it was originally the dressing-room. Passing this room I noticed a couple of housemaids preparing it for the night, and discovered with a shiver that Lady Carwitchet was to be my next-door neighbor. It gave me a turn.

The bishop's strange warning must have unnerved me. I was perfectly safe from her ladyship. The disused door into her room was locked, and the key safe on the housekeeper's bunch. It was also undiscoverable on her side, the recess in which it stood being completely filled by a large wardrobe. On my side hung a thick sound-proof *portière*. Nevertheless, I resolved not to use that room while she inhabited the next one. I removed my possessions, fastened the door of communication with my bedroom, and dragged a heavy ottoman across it.

Then I stowed away my emerald in my strong-box. It is built into the wall of my sitting-room, and masked by the lower part of an old carved oak bureau. I put away even the rings I wore habitually, keeping out only an inferior cat's-eye for workaday wear. I had just made all safe when Leta tapped at the door and came in to wish me good night. She looked flushed and harassed and ready to cry.

"Uncle Paul," she began, "I want you to go up to town at once, and stay away till I send for you."

"My dear—!" I was too amazed to expostulate.

"We've got a—a pestilence among us," she declared, her foot tapping the ground angrily, "and the least we can do is to go into quarantine. Oh, I'm so sorry and so ashamed! The poor bishop! I'll take good care that no one else shall meet that woman here. You did your best for me, Uncle Paul, and managed admirably, but it was all no use. I hoped against hope that what between the dusk of the drawing-room before dinner, and being put at opposite ends of the table, we might get through without a meeting——"

"But, my dear, explain. Why shouldn't the bishop and Lady Carwitchet meet? Why is it worse for him than anyone else?"

"Why? I thought everybody had heard of that dreadful wife of his who nearly broke his heart. If he married her for her money it served him right, but Lady Landor says she was very handsome and really in love with him at first. Then Lady Carwitchet got hold of her and led her into all sorts of mischief. She left her husband—he was only a rector with a country living in those days—and went to live in town, got into a horrid fast set, and made herself notorious. You *must* have heard of her."

"I heard of her sapphires, my dear. But I was in Brazil at the time."

"I wish you had been at home. You might have found her out. She was furious because her husband refused to let her wear the great Valdez sapphire. It had been in the Montanaro family for some generations, and her father settled it first on her and then on her little girl—the bishop being trustee. He felt obliged to take away the little girl, and send her off to be brought up by some old aunts in the country, and he locked up the sapphire. Lady Carwitchet tells as a splendid joke how they got the copy made in Paris, and it did just as well for the people to stare at. No wonder the bishop hates the very name of the stone."

"How long will she stay here?" I asked dismally.

"Till Lord Carwitchet can come and escort her to Paris to visit some American friends. Goodness knows when that will be! Do go up to town, Uncle Paul!"

I refused indignantly. The very least I could do was to stand by my poor young relatives in their troubles and help them through. I did so. I wore that inferior cat's eye for six weeks!

It is a time I cannot think of even now without a shudder. The more I saw of that terrible old woman the more I detested her, and we saw a very great deal of her. Leta kept her word, and neither accepted nor gave invitations all that time. We were cut off from all society but that of old General Fairford, who would go anywhere and meet anyone to get a rubber after dinner; the doctor, a sporting widower; and the Duberlys, a giddy, rather rackety young couple who had taken the Dower House for a year. Lady Carwitchet seemed perfectly content. She reveled in the soft living and good fare of the Manor House, the drives in Leta's big barouche, and Domenico's dinners, as one to whom short commons were not unknown. She had a hungry way of grabbing and grasping at everything she could—the shillings she won at whist, the best fruit at dessert, the postage stamps in the library inkstand—that was infinitely suggestive. Sometimes I could have pitied her, she was so greedy, so spiteful, so friendless. She always made me think of some wicked old pirate putting into a peaceful port to provision and repair his battered old hulk, obliged to live on friendly terms with the natives, but his piratical old nostrils asniff for plunder and his piratical old soul longing to be off marauding once more. When would that be? Not till the arrival in Paris of her distinguished American friends, of whom we heard a great deal. "Charming people, the Bokums of Chicago, the American branch of the English Beauchamps, you know!" They seemed to be taking an unconscionable time to get there. She would have insisted on being driven over to Northchurch to call at the palace, but that the bishop was understood to be holding confirmations at the other end of the diocese.

I was alone in the house one afternoon sitting by my window, toying with the key of my safe, and wondering whether I dare treat myself to a peep at my treasures, when a suspicious movement in the park below caught my attention. A black figure certainly dodged from behind one tree to the next, and then into the shadow of the park paling instead of keeping to the footpath. It looked queer. I caught up my field glass and marked him at one point where he was bound to come into the open for a few steps. He crossed the strip of turf with giant strides and got into cover again, but not quick enough to prevent me recognizing him. It was—great heavens!—the bishop! In a soft hat pulled over his forehead, with a long cloak and a big stick, he looked like a poacher.

Guided by some mysterious instinct I hurried to meet him. I opened the conservatory door, and in he rushed like a hunted rabbit. Without explanation I led him up the wide staircase to my room, where he dropped into a chair and wiped his face.

"You are astonished, Mr. Acton," he panted. "I will explain directly. Thanks." He tossed off the glass of brandy I had poured out without waiting for the qualifying soda, and looked better.

"I am in serious trouble. You can help me. I've had a shock to-day—a grievous shock." He stopped and tried to pull himself together. "I must trust you implicitly, Mr. Acton, I have no choice. Tell me what you think of this." He drew a case from his breast pocket and opened it. "I promised you should see the Valdez sapphire. Look there!"

The Valdez sapphire! A great big shining lump of blue crystal—flawless and of perfect color—that was all. I took it up, breathed on it, drew out my magnifier, looked at it in one light and another. What was wrong with it? I could not say. Nine experts out of ten would undoubtedly have pronounced the stone genuine. I, by virtue of some mysterious instinct that has hitherto always guided me aright, was the unlucky tenth. I looked at the bishop. His

eyes met mine. There was no need of spoken word between us.

"Has Lady Carwitchet shown you her sapphire?" was his most unexpected question. "She has? Now, Mr. Acton, on your honor as a connoisseur and a gentleman, which of the two is the Valdez?"

"Not this one." I could say naught else.

"You were my last hope." He broke off, and dropped his face on his folded arms with a groan that shook the table on which he rested, while I stood dismayed at myself for having let so hasty a judgment escape me. He lifted a ghastly countenance to me. "She vowed she would see me ruined and disgraced. I made her my enemy by crossing some of her schemes once, and she never forgives. She will keep her word. I shall appear before the world as a fraudulent trustee. I can neither produce the valuable confided to my charge nor make the loss good. I have only an incredible story to tell," he dropped his head and groaned again. "Who will believe me?"

"I will, for one."

"Ah, you? Yes, you know her. She took my wife from me, Mr. Acton. Heaven only knows what the hold was that she had over poor Mira. She encouraged her to set me at defiance and eventually to leave me. She was answerable for all the scandalous folly and extravagance of poor Mira's life in Paris—spare me the telling of the story. She left her at last to die alone and uncared for. I reached my wife to find her dying of a fever from which Lady Carwitchet and her crew had fled. She was raving in delirium, and died without recognizing me. Some trouble she had been in which I must never know oppressed her. At the very last she roused from a long stupor and spoke to the nurse. 'Tell him to get the sapphire back—she stole it. She has robbed my child.' Those were her last words. The nurse understood no English, and treated them as wandering; but *I* heard them, and knew she was sane when she spoke."

"What did you do?"

"What could I? I saw Lady Carwitchet, who laughed at me, and defied me to make her confess or disgorge. I took the pendant to more than one eminent jeweler on pretense of having the setting seen to, and all have examined and admired without giving a hint of there being anything wrong. I allowed a celebrated mineralogist to see it; he gave no sign——"

"Perhaps they are right and we are wrong."

"No, no. Listen. I heard of an old Dutchman celebrated for his imitations. I went to him, and he told me at once that he had been allowed by Montanaro to copy the Valdez—setting and all—for the Paris Exhibition. I showed him this, and he claimed it for his own work at once, and pointed out his private mark upon it. You must take your magnifier to find it; a Greek Beta. He also told me that he had sold it to Lady Carwitchet more than a year ago."

"It is a terrible position."

"It is. My co-trustee died lately. I have never dared to have another appointed. I am bound to hand over the sapphire to my daughter on her marriage, if her husband consents to take the name of Montanaro."

The bishop's face was ghastly pale, and the moisture started on his brow. I racked my brain for some word of comfort.

"Miss Panton may never marry."

"But she will!" he shouted. "That is the blow that has been dealt me to-day. My chaplain—actually, my chaplain—tells me that he is going out as a temperance missionary to equatorial Africa, and has the assurance to add that he believes my daughter is not indisposed to accompany him!" His consummating wrath acted as a momentary stimulant. He sat upright, his eyes flashing and his brow thunderous. I felt for that chaplain. Then he collapsed miserably. "The sapphires will have to be produced, identified, revalued. How shall I come out of it? Think of the disgrace, the ripping up of old scandals! Even if I were to compound with Lady Carwitchet, the sum she

hinted at was too monstrous. She wants more than my money. Help me, Mr. Acton! For the sake of your own family interests, help me!"

"I beg your pardon—family interests? I don't understand."

"If my daughter is childless, her next of kin is poor Marmaduke Panton, who is dying at Cannes, not married, or likely to marry; and failing him, your nephew, Sir Thomas Acton, succeeds."

My nephew Tom! Leta, or Leta's baby, might come to be the possible inheritor of the great Valdez sapphire! The blood rushed to my head as I looked at the great shining swindle before me. "What diabolic jugglery was at work when the exchange was made?" I demanded fiercely.

"It must have been on the last occasion of her wearing the sapphires in London. I ought never to have let her out of my sight."

"You must put a stop to Miss Panton's marriage in the first place," I pronounced as autocratically as he could have done himself.

"Not to be thought of," he admitted helplessly. "Mira has my force of character. She knows her rights, and she will have her jewels. I want you to take charge of the—thing for me. If it's in the house she'll make me produce it. She'll inquire at the banker's. If *you* have it we can gain time, if but for a day or two." He broke off. Carriage wheels were crashing on the gravel outside. We looked at one another in consternation. Flight was imperative. I hurried him downstairs and out of the conservatory just as the door bell rang. I think we both lost our heads in the confusion. He shoved the case into my hands, and I pocketed it, without a thought of the awful responsibility I was incurring, and saw him disappear into the shelter of the friendly night.

When I think of what my feelings were that evening—of my murderous hatred of that smirking, jesting Jezebel who sat opposite me at dinner, my wrathful indignation at the thought of the poor little expected heir defrauded ere

his birth; of the crushing contempt I felt for myself and the bishop as a pair of witless idiots unable to see our way out of the dilemma; all this boiling and surging through my soul, I can only wonder—Domenico having given himself a holiday, and the kitchen maid doing her worst and wickedest—that gout or jaundice did not put an end to this story at once.

"Uncle Paul!" Leta was looking her sweetest when she tripped into my room next morning. "I've news for you. She," pointing a delicate forefinger in the direction of the corridor, "is going! Her Bokums have reached Paris at last, and sent for her to join them at the Grand Hotel."

I was thunderstruck. The longed-for deliverance had but come to remove hopelessly and forever out of my reach Lady Carwitchet and the great Valdez sapphire.

"Why, aren't you overjoyed? I am. We are going to celebrate the event by a dinner party. Tom's hospitable soul is vexed by the lack of entertainment we had provided her. We must ask the Brownleys some day or other, and they will be delighted to meet anything in the way of a ladyship, or such smart folks as the Duberly-Parkers. Then we may as well have the Blomfields, and air that awful modern Sèvres dessert service she gave us when we were married." I had no objection to make, and she went on, rubbing her soft cheek against my shoulder like the purring little cat she was: "Now I want you to do something to please me—and Mrs. Blomfield. She has set her heart on seeing your rubies, and though I know you hate her about as much as you do that Sèvres china——"

"What! Wear my rubies with that! I won't. I'll tell you what I will do, though. I've got some carbuncles as big as prize gooseberries, a whole set. Then you have only to put those Bohemian glass vases and candelabra on the table, and let your gardener do his worst with his great forced, scentless, vulgar blooms, and we shall all be in keeping." Leta pouted. An idea struck me. "Or I'll do as

you wish, on one condition. You get Lady Carwitchet to wear her big sapphire, and don't tell her I wish it."

I lived through the next few days as one in some evil dream. The sapphires, like twin specters, haunted me day and night. Was ever man so tantalized? To hold the shadow and see the substance dangled temptingly within reach. The bishop made no sign of ridding me of my unwelcome charge, and the thought of what might happen in a case of burglary—fire—earthquake—made me start and tremble at all sorts of inopportune moments.

I kept faith with Leta, and reluctantly produced my beautiful rubies on the night of her dinner party. Emerging from my room I came full upon Lady Carwitchet in the corridor. She was dressed for dinner, and at her throat I caught the blue gleam of the great sapphire. Leta had kept faith with me. I don't know what I stammered in reply to her ladyship's remarks; my whole soul was absorbed in the contemplation of the intoxicating loveliness of the gem. *That* a Palais Royal deception! Incredible! My fingers twitched, my breath came short and fierce with the lust of possession. She must have seen the covetous glare in my eyes. A look of gratified spiteful complacency overspread her features, as she swept on ahead and descended the stairs before me. I followed her to the drawing-room door. She stopped suddenly, and murmuring something unintelligible hurried back again.

Everybody was assembled there that I expected to see, with an addition. Not a welcome one by the look on Tom's face. He stood on the hearthrug conversing with a great hulking, high-shouldered fellow, sallow-faced, with a heavy mustache and drooping eyelids, from the corners of which flashed out a sudden suspicious look as I approached, which lighted up into a greedy one as it rested on my rubies, and seemed unaccountably familiar to me, till Lady Carwitchet tripping past me exclaimed:

"He has come at last! My naughty, naughty boy! Mr. Acton, this is my son, Lord Carwitchet!"

I broke off short in the midst of my polite acknowledg-

ments to stare blankly at her. The sapphire was gone! A great gilt cross, with a Scotch pebble like an acid drop, was her sole decoration.

"I had to put my pendant away," she explained confidentially; "the clasp had got broken somehow." I didn't believe a word.

Lord Carwitchet contributed little to the general entertainment at dinner, but fell into confidential talk with Mrs. Duberly-Parker. I caught a few unintelligible remarks across the table. They referred, I subsequently discovered, to the lady's little book on Northchurch races, and I recollected that the Spring Meeting was on, and to-morrow "Cup Day." After dinner there was great talk about getting up a party to go on General Fairford's drag. Lady Carwitchet was in ecstasies and tried to coax me into joining. Leta declined positively. Tom accepted sulkily.

The look in Lord Carwitchet's eye returned to my mind as I locked up my rubies that night. It made him look so like his mother! I went round my fastenings with unusual care. Safe and closets and desk and doors, I tried them all. Coming at last to the bathroom, it opened at once. It was the housemaid's doing. She had evidently taken advantage of my having abandoned the room to give it "a thorough spring cleaning," and I anathematized her. The furniture was all piled together and veiled with sheets, the carpet and felt curtain were gone, there were new brooms about. As I peered around, a voice close at my ear made me jump—Lady Carwitchet's!

"I tell you I have nothing, not a penny! I shall have to borrow my train fare before I can leave this. They'll be glad enough to lend it."

Not only had the *portière* been removed, but the door behind it had been unlocked and left open for convenience of dusting behind the wardrobe. I might as well have been in the bedroom.

"Don't tell me," I recognized Carwitchet's growl. "You've not been here all this time for nothing. You've been collecting for a Kilburn cot or getting subscriptions

for the distressed Irish landlords. I know you. Now I'm not going to see myself ruined for the want of a paltry hundred or so. I tell you the colt is a dead certainty. If I could have got a thousand or two on him last week, we might have ended our dog days millionaires. Hand over what you can. You've money's worth, if not money. Where's that sapphire you stole?"

"I didn't. I can show you the receipted bill. All *I* possess is honestly come by. What could you do with it, even if I gave it you? You couldn't sell it as the Valdez, and you can't get it cut up as you might if it were real."

"If it's only bogus, why are you always in such a flutter about it? I'll do something with it, never fear. Hand over."

"I can't. I haven't got it. I had to raise something on it before I left town."

"Will you swear it's not in that wardrobe? I dare say you will. I mean to see. Give me those keys."

I heard a struggle and a jingle, then the wardrobe door must have been flung open, for a streak of light struck through a crack in the wood of the back. Creeping close and peeping through, I could see an awful sight. Lady Carwitchet in a flannel wrapper, minus hair, teeth, complexion, pointing a skinny forefinger that quivered with rage at her son, who was out of the range of my vision.

"Stop that, and throw those keys down here directly, or I'll rouse the house. Sir Thomas is a magistrate, and will lock you up as soon as look at you." She clutched at the bell rope as she spoke. "I'll swear I'm in danger of my life from you and give you in charge. Yes, and when you're in prison I'll keep you there till you die. I've often thought I'd do it. How about the hotel robberies last summer at Cowes, eh? Mightn't the police be grateful for a hint or two? And how about——"

The keys fell with a crash on the bed, accompanied by some bad language in an apologetic tone, and the door slammed to. I crept trembling to bed.

This new and horrible complication of the situation filled

me with dismay. Lord Carwitchet's wolfish glance at my rubies took a new meaning. They were safe enough, I believed—but the sapphire! If he disbelieved his mother, how long would she be able to keep it from his clutches? That she had some plot of her own of which the bishop would eventually be the victim I did not doubt, or why had she not made her bargain with him long ago? But supposing she took fright, lost her head, allowed her son to wrest the jewel from her, or gave consent to its being mutilated, divided! I lay in a cold perspiration till morning.

My terrors haunted me all day. They were with me at breakfast time when Lady Carwitchet, tripping in smiling, made a last attempt to induce me to accompany her and keep her "bad, bad boy" from getting among "those horrid betting men."

They haunted me through the long peaceful day with Leta and the *tête-à-tête* dinner, but they swarmed around and beset me sorest when, sitting alone over my sitting-room fire, I listened for the return of the drag party. I read my newspaper and brewed myself some hot strong drink, but there comes a time of night when no fire can warm and no drink can cheer. The bishop's despairing face kept me company, and his troubles and the wrongs of the future heir took possession of me. Then the uncanny noises that make all old houses ghostly during the small hours began to make themselves heard. Muffled footsteps trod the corridor, stopping to listen at every door, door latches gently clicked, boards creaked unreasonably, sounds of stealthy movements came from the locked-up bathroom. The welcome crash of wheels at last, and the sound of the front-door bell. I could hear Lady Carwitchet making her shrill *adieux* to her friends and her steps in the corridor. She was softly humming a little song as she approached. I heard her unlock her bedroom door before she entered—an odd thing to do. Tom came sleepily stumbling to his room later. I put my head out. "Where is Lord Carwitchet?"

"Haven't you seen him? He left us hours ago. Not

come home, eh? Well, he's welcome to stay away. I don't want to see more of him." Tom's brow was dark and his voice surly. "I gave him to understand as much." Whatever had happened, Tom was evidently too disgusted to explain just then.

I went back to my fire unaccountably relieved, and brewed myself another and a stronger brew. It warmed me this time, but excited me foolishly. There must be some way out of the difficulty. I felt now as if I could almost see it if I gave my mind to it. Why—suppose—there might be no difficulty after all! The bishop was a nervous old gentleman. He might have been mistaken all through, Bogaerts might have been mistaken, I might—no. I could not have been mistaken — or I thought not. I fidgeted and fumed and argued with myself till I found I should have no peace of mind without a look at the stone in my possession, and I actually went to the safe and took the case out.

The sapphire certainly looked different by lamplight. I sat and stared, and all but overpersuaded my better judgment into giving it a verdict. Bogaerts's mark—I suddenly remembered it. I took my magnifier and held the pendant to the light. There, scratched upon the stone, was the Greek Beta! There came a tap on my door, and before I could answer, the handle turned softly and Lord Carwitchet stood before me. I whipped the case into my dressing-gown pocket and stared at him. He was not pleasant to look at, especially at that time of night. He had a dishevelled, desperate air, his voice was hoarse, his red-rimmed eyes wild.

"I beg your pardon," he began civilly enough. "I saw your light burning, and thought, as we go by the early train to-morrow, you might allow me to consult you now on a little business of my mother's." His eyes roved about the room. Was he trying to find the whereabouts of my safe? "You know a lot about precious stones, don't you?"

"So my friends are kind enough to say. Won't you sit

down? I have unluckily little chance of indulging the taste on my own account," was my cautious reply.

"But you've written a book about them, and know them when you see them, don't you? Now my mother has given me something, and would like you to give a guess at its value. Perhaps you can put me in the way of disposing of it?"

"I certainly can do so if it is worth anything. Is that it?" I was in a fever of excitement, for I guessed what was clutched in his palm. He held out to me the Valdez sapphire.

How it shone and sparkled like a great blue star! I made myself a deprecating smile as I took it from him, but how dare I call it false to its face? As well accuse the sun in heaven of being a cheap imitation. I faltered and prevaricated feebly. Where was my moral courage, and where was the good, honest, thumping lie that should have aided me? "I have the best authority for recognizing this as a very good copy of a famous stone in the possession of the Bishop of Northchurch." His scowl grew so black that I saw he believed me, and I went on more cheerily: "This was manufactured by Johannes Bogaerts—I can give you his address, and you can make inquiries yourself—by special permission of the then owner, the late Leone Montanaro."

"Hand it back!" he interrupted (his other remarks were outrageous, but satisfactory to hear); but I waved him off. I couldn't give it up. It fascinated me. I toyed with it, I caressed it. I made it display its different tones of color. I must see the two stones together. I must see it outshine its paltry rival. It was a whimsical frenzy that seized me —I can call it by no other name.

"Would you like to see the original? Curiously enough, I have it here. The bishop has left it in my charge."

The wolfish light flamed up in Carwitchet's eyes as I drew forth the case. He laid the Valdez down on a sheet of paper, and I placed the other, still in its case, beside it. In that moment they looked identical, except for the little

loop of sham stones, replaced by a plain gold band in the bishop's jewel. Carwitchet leaned across the table eagerly, the table gave a lurch, the lamp tottered, crashed over, and we were left in semidarkness.

"Don't stir!" Carwitchet shouted. "The paraffin is all over the place!" He seized my sofa blanket, and flung it over the table while I stood helpless. "There, that's safe now. Have you candles on the chimney-piece? I've got matches."

He looked very white and excited as he lit up. "Might have been an awkward job with all that burning paraffin running about," he said quite pleasantly. "I hope no real harm is done." I was lifting the rug with shaking hands. The two stones lay as I had placed them. No! I nearly dropped it back again. It was the stone in the case that had the loop with the three sham sapphires!

Carwitchet picked the other up hastily. "So you say this is rubbish?" he asked, his eyes sparkling wickedly, and an attempt at mortification in his tone.

"Utter rubbish!" I pronounced, with truth and decision, snapping up the case and pocketing it. "Lady Carwitchet must have known it."

"Ah, well, it's disappointing, isn't it? Good-by, we shall not meet again."

I shook hands with him most cordially. "Good-by, Lord Carwitchet. *So* glad to have met you and your mother. It has been a source of the *greatest* pleasure, I assure you."

I have never seen the Carwitchets since. The bishop drove over next day in rather better spirits. Miss Panton had refused the chaplain.

"It doesn't matter, my lord," I said to him heartily. "We've all been under some strange misconception. The stone in your possession is the veritable one. I could swear to that anywhere. The sapphire Lady Carwitchet wears is only an excellent imitation, and—I have seen it with my own eyes—is the one bearing Bogaerts's mark, the Greek Beta."

Without the Wedding Garment

On one of Lady George Athol's "first Thursdays" her rooms were filling to overflow. Barn Street was blocked with carriages. Lady George stood on the big square landing at the top of the stairs and gave her hand so often that after a time it seemed no longer her own. The people thronged up and up. The current appeared unending, and she felt almost as if the circle must be complete, and the string of guests must be revolving, as in a child's toy the figures that are gummed on to a tape and go up to the mill move in endless succession up and up and up.

Her tongue was tired too and so was her smile, but each was kept in active work. "How do you do?" "How do you do?" "How do you do?" "Your son not with you? No? I am sorry." "What lovely flowers!" "How do you do?" "How do you do?" "No, almost cold." "How do you do?" "Yes, stifling." "Ah, Mrs. Keith—I scarcely thought you would get away. Dull—was it? What, none of the right people? Didn't suppose for an instant there would be."

"Let me stand here for one moment. I want so much to know who some one is who came in just before us. A beautiful woman. Quite too lovely."

"Mrs. Venables probably. Not Mrs. Venables? Fair? Lady Fleet? No? Miss Adair? No? Then I can't tell you till I see her."

"She is coming up now. There, with the fair hair. No—in front of the Brabazons." Lady George had the mischance to drop her bouquet, and in the momentary confusion a name was lost.

The lady who advanced behind the unheard name was fair to whiteness almost. Her hair was of a peculiar shade of yellow like pale sulphur. Her eyes were of the lightest gray.

Lady George gave her hand and said, "How do you

do?" The Brabazons occupied her with some elaborate explanation about why they had been unable to dine in Barn Street, and in the meantime the lady, with a murmured word, had passed on. Lady George looked after her. She was bowing to some one. She was bowing again —and now again. Apparently she had many friends in the room.

Mr. Brabazon was talking to Mrs. Keith, who as soon as he had moved away turned to her hostess.

"She *is* handsome. I hope your flowers were not spoiled. I didn't catch the name." The lady was lost in the smart crowd. "Neither did I," said Lady George blankly, "and I don't know her from Adam. She must be some friend of the girls'. Joan or Maud must have sent her a card—my memory is so bad. I can't leave this; if you come across either of my daughters, will you send her to me, Mrs. Keith? Oh, here is my husband. George —George—go into the room and tell me who the striking-looking woman with the yellow hair is."

"There are dozens of 'em. Which?"

"I'll show you," said Mrs. Keith. She was interested.

The two moved away, but like the dove from the ark they did not return.

Lady George after ten minutes or so felt that she had done her duty and she left the top of the stairs. She forgot the unknown lady, and it was half an hour before she came across one of her daughters.

"Maud, I had something to ask you and I forget what. Oh, yes. Who is—I can't see her now—yes, there she is —that woman with the yellow hair standing by the mantelpiece."

"In white?—I don't know."

"But neither do I. I thought you would be able to tell me. Find Joan and send her to me."

It was twenty minutes before Lady George's second daughter appeared before her. By that time the lady had moved her place.

"I know the one you mean," said Joan, "but I don't

know who she is. She has very curious hair and she is in white."

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know."

Mrs. Keith came up.

"Lord George doesn't know," she said.

"I can easily find out," said Joan. "She has been talking to Charlie Vincent for the last ten minutes; I'll ask him."

She moved away as she spoke.

Young Vincent was leaning against a pillar and laughing heartily. He was the butt for the moment of the chaff of two of his friends. Joan heard a few of their remarks.

"He didn't mind, don't you know—awfully pretty woman like that. Neither would you."

"Said she met him at Nice, and dear old Charlie's never been out of the country in his life."

Vincent caught Miss Athol's eye.

"You are going to let me take you down to supper?" he said to her.

"I will see later on," said Joan. "Just now I want you to tell me something. What is the name of the lady you were talking to a few minutes ago?"

He began to laugh.

"At what?" said Joan.

"Well, the whole thing. Those two chaps have been chaffing me like anything as it is. You mean the handsome woman with the fair hair?"

"Yes."

"I was standing near her when she turned round and put out her hand. She said, 'Mr. Vincent, isn't it?' And I said yes, and then she said she hadn't seen me for ever so long, and I didn't like to pretend that I did not know her, so I said that it *was* rather a long time; and then we talked for a bit."

"And you don't know who she is?"

"Never saw her before in my life. Who is she?"

"Where did she think she had met you?" said Joan, without answering his question.

"Well, you see, that didn't come out till quite the end. She said it must be two years since the days at Nice, and by that time I was so steeped in deception and I had allowed my reminiscences of our former acquaintance to go such lengths in order to coincide with hers, that I had not the face to tell her that I had never been at Nice in my life. She mistook me for some one else; I knew that after the first half dozen words; but you see I had woven such a tangled web that I couldn't get out of it, even if I had wanted to, and those two chaps say I didn't."

Joan laughed.

"She is very handsome," she said, "but I am not quite sure that she is good style."

"And you won't come down to supper?"

"Not now."

"I would ask *her* if I knew her name," said Vincent. "I must get Lady George to tell me when I see her."

"You won't do that," said Joan, and she left him with a smile that he failed to interpret.

Miss Athol went back to her mother. On the way she passed the fair unknown talking to Mr. Brabazon.

"I watched that," Mrs. Keith was saying; "she dropped her fan. Well, Joan, what had Mr. Vincent to tell you?"

"Nothing," said Miss Athol. "The mystery remains a mystery. She mistook him for some one else."

"She bowed to Lady Beckenham, I think. Here is Lady Beckenham. I will ask her."

"Not to me," said Lady Beckenham.

Lady George explained the situation.

"If I were in your case I should go to her myself," said Lady Beckenham.

"I must, I think," said Lady George, and she sought her unknown guest.

"You will pardon me," she said; "but I did not hear your name, and—my memory is bad. I do not recall your face."

"I am Mrs. Darbishire," said the lady. "I was so sorry not to return your call on Monday. It was good of you to come and see me so soon."

"Darbishire!—Call!"

Lady George looked at her vacantly. The lady caught something of her hostess's expression.

"Can there be any mistake?" she said. "I don't know you, of course, because I did not see you when you called. You heard from my dear friends, the Van Lindens, of New York, and you came to see me and asked me to your party?"

Lady George looked more vacant.

"You are Mrs. Sefton, surely," said the lady.

"There is some mistake," said Lady George. "I am Lady George Athol."

Mrs. Darbishire started to her feet.

"How can I sufficiently apologize?" she said. "I am a stranger in London, and I only arrived from New York last week. I had an introduction to Mrs. Sefton. I do not know her personally, so I did not discover my mistake. I came in a hansom, and I suppose the driver mistook my directions."

Lady George smiled graciously.

"The mistake is easily explained if Mrs.—Mrs. Sefton lives in Barn Square."

"That is it, I think," said Mrs. Darbishire.

"And this is Barn Street."

"I am so distressed this should have happened," said Mrs. Darbishire.

"Not at all," said Lady George. "You found some friends here, I hope, and it has given us the pleasure of your company."

The lady, with reiterated apologies, bowed and took her departure.

A man who passed her on the stairs looked at her fixedly and hurried up to his hostess.

"Will you tell me that lady's name?" he said.

"Five minutes ago I might have asked you, Colonel

Weston. She is a Mrs. Darbishire, I believe. Her cabman mistook Barn Street for Barn Square."

"You know nothing about her?"

"Nothing."

"Then excuse me."

Colonel Weston hurried down to the hall. Mrs. Darbishire was coming from the cloak room.

"Mademoiselle Lestocq will permit me to see her to her hotel?" he said quietly.

The lady started, then smiled and bowed.

"Monsieur est bien aimable," she said.

He followed her to the hansom and got in. He spoke up through the trap.

"Drive slowly to the end of the street, and I will direct you."

He turned then to his companion.

"We meet again, mademoiselle."

"Oui, monsieur."

"Mademoiselle has, perhaps, few friends in London."

"Not many, monsieur."

"Mademoiselle, however, starts well under such a wing as that of Lady George Athol."

"Without doubt, monsieur."

"A more softly feathered wing than that of the law, mademoiselle. You should know."

"Monsieur is facetious."

"I should like to see what you have in your pocket, mademoiselle."

"My handkerchief, monsieur."

"What else?"

"A meager purse."

"What else?"

"That is all."

"That figure clad in dark blue is a policeman. What else, mademoiselle?"

"Only this," said Mrs. Darbishire. She handed him a small diamond brooch as she spoke.

"Only that?"

"That is all, monsieur. I have had no luck."

"You are sure that is all? A word to my friend in blue——"

"Save yourself the trouble, monsieur. That is all."

"Good night, mademoiselle. Good night for the old sake's sake."

"Good night," said Mrs. Darbishire.

Colonel Weston called another cab and drove back to Barn Street.

"A chance likeness, perhaps, to some one I met in Paris," he said to Lady George. "One is easily mistaken. I have just picked this up," he added, putting the brooch into her hand; "do you know whose it is?"

"Some one is sure to claim it," said Lady George.

A few days later it chanced that Lady George Athol and Mrs. Sefton met.

"I suppose you heard from your friend, Mrs. Darbishire, of her coming to my crush in mistake for yours," said Lady George.

"Mrs. Darbishire!" said Mrs. Sefton; "but she came to *me* the night before last for you. Her cabman mistook——"

Lady George opened her eyes.

"When did that happen?"

"On Wednesday. I have good reason to remember the day, for I lost an emerald bracelet."

Mr. Twistleton's Typewriter

Several strange things have happened to me in my life that my friends could never account for. They could never understand how I got an introduction to Twistleton, Q.C., nor why that learned gentleman, after allowing me to devil his work for him for ten years without putting anything in my way, suddenly used every effort and influence he was capable of to put an important and valuable junior practice in my hands.

Twistleton, Q.C., was a hard, selfish man. In person he was like a badly dried moth, whose long, old-fashioned whiskers resembled the remains of wings. It was of him that it was originally said that he was the living representative of a tenant in tail after possibility of issue extinct; and there was consequently great surprise when Twistleton married Lucy Travers, who, as you will remember, was the belle of her season. But the Travers were not so well off as they pretended to be, and Twistleton, as we all know, made his fifteen thousand a year, and had, if anything, an ever-increasing practice in the Chancery Division.

Twistleton was undoubtedly a great lawyer, and a man of strong common sense, but he had two fads. He was a believer in ghosts, and he wrote everything in his chambers upon a Remington typewriter.

Twistleton and his wife were staying one June in Norfolk, at Lady Barndore's. Twistleton was due in town to argue the great patent case concerning sewing machines of Buncombe and Another *v.* Badger, in the Court of Appeal, on Wednesday morning. I expected him back in chambers on the Monday evening, understanding that he intended rejoining his wife at the end of the week; for this case would last at least three days, and Twistleton was in several other cases on the list.

About eight o'clock on Monday evening I had dined early at my club, and was engaged noting up Twistleton's papers, when he came in, with his Gladstone bag and rug, looking, as I thought, tired and out of spirits. When Twistleton was in town by himself he always slept at his own chambers, as in the old days before he was married; and his breakfast (a chop and two eggs) was sent in from the "Cock."

Twistleton, having heard what Foss, his clerk, had to say on the subject of retainers, dismissed him. Then he slammed down the windows, which I had opened to let in what fresh air there was in Old Square, carefully closed the door, let himself into the hard chair in front of his writing-

table, and idly leaned over the papers which were before him. At length the outer door was heard to close; Foss had departed, and Twistleton broke silence.

"Penrose, my dear fellow, I'm uncomfortable."

Twistleton, I may here remark, was always on the best of terms with me, and treated me as a friend, for I believe I was useful to him. I had made great way in his affections by solemnly advising him to marry Miss Travers when I saw he was bent on doing so; but, since his marriage, I am not sure that this course of conduct of mine had been altogether to my advantage. I looked to him for a further explanation, which I saw was coming.

"Penrose, my dear fellow, who do you think is at Lady Barndore's?"

I shook my head, being entirely in ignorance.

"Charley Colston," replied Twistleton, trying to carve his whiskers with a paper knife. "Charley Colston."

Poor Charley Colston! It was well known that he had paid his addresses to pretty Mrs. Twistleton in former days, and report said she had encouraged them. No wonder Twistleton was excited. I knew him to be of an extremely jealous nature.

"Now mark me, Penrose," said Twistleton, shaking his forefinger at me as he would at Lord Usher in the Appeal Court, "what took place yesterday when I was playing tennis? The whole time, sir, he and she were talking and chatting together, and laughing—yes, laughing! Perhaps at my play, for I played abominably; I know it. I could not bear to see them."

Twistleton's tennis was never first-rate. He had begun to play too late in life. He was an annoying partner, as he always insisted on leading, taking all the difficult strokes, and failing at them. He was a still more objectionable opponent, as he was always taking technical objections on points of practice. Still, however badly one plays, it is not pleasant to be laughed at, even by one's wife. I tried to soothe Twistleton, but he interrupted me.

"Now there is another point I desire to urge." Twis-

tleton always spoke as though he was addressing the Court of Appeal. "When I asked my wife to come back to-day, she point-blank refused. What do you think of that?"

"Nothing whatever," I answered. "She had arranged to stay, and you are going down on Saturday again. I think you are making mountains out of molehills."

"I hope I am, Penrose, I hope I am," replied Twistleton mournfully; "but you didn't see them—I did;" and Twistleton sighed deeply.

Then the subject dropped, and we got to work on a small case. Soon Twistleton, with a self-complacent smile on his countenance, was playing an opinion on his typewriter. It was to him, I believe, as though each note he struck produced a deep mellow tone, and not a capital or small Roman. I can remember when Twistleton first had his typewriter. In those days he used to sit at it for hours practicing; hitting first one note and then the other, at intervals varying between ten seconds and two or three minutes, every now and then using the most horrible language, as he put a capital for a small Roman or missed a space. Then his efforts looked as though they were the productions of six drunken printers who had each taken an absent comrade's work for the day; and they were always copied before they went to clients. Now the machine went click, click, click, evenly and merrily. Twistleton was a perfect master of it. I had seen him work it with his eyes shut. I have no doubt that if he could have stood on his head, and if it had been consonant with the dignity of a Queen's Counsel to do so, he could have played his instrument in that posture.

The opinion finished, Twistleton, who was a very methodical man, put a fresh sheet of paper in readiness to commence again, folded and signed what he had written, and bade me good night. His last words to me were:

"I hope you are right about Charley Colston."

"I am sure of it," I said.

"I wish I were."

To-morrow we were to have a long day at Buncombe

v. Badger. When I arrived in the morning, Twistleton was at breakfast. I no sooner entered than he set down his egg spoon, and, rushing at me with a piece of paper, thrust it into my hands.

"Read that," he cried excitedly—"read that!"

I noticed that Twistleton seemed unwell. There was a wild look in his eyes. His chop was untouched—a reversal of Twistleton's procedure at breakfast, which was more extraordinary to me than his strange appearance. The egg he was eating was, to anyone with a sense of smell, manifestly a bad one; a most portentous fact to me, who remember hearing Twistleton—who never knew any criminal law—seriously tell the boy from the "Cock" that he believed a bill of attainder would lie against him for bringing him a bad egg. What did it all mean? I looked at the paper in my hands. On it were two words, neatly printed —"Charley Colston."

I stared blankly at Twistleton. What did it mean? Twistleton was shaking visibly.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" he asked anxiously.

"Certainly not," I replied.

"Ah!" sighed Twistleton; and added sententiously, "'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.'" This was the only quotation I ever heard him utter that did not come from the Law Reports. I believe he fancied it was a phrase he had invented in his early youth when he first began to believe in ghosts.

"If you don't believe in ghosts, who wrote that message on my typewriter?"

Twistleton's manner was very impressive. I felt like a witness committing perjury.

"I tell you, I found it this morning when I went to write a letter just before breakfast. Who wrote it?" he shouted. "Who wrote it? I will know."

"Perhaps Foss," I suggested.

"He has not been here, and can't use the typewriter."

I had heard him say so, but did not believe it. Foss

was afraid of overworking himself, and so did not choose to learn it, but any fool could use it if he liked to learn. My opinion was that Foss could use it. He was like the monkeys, who, as the negro said, "could talk if they would, but knew if they did they would be made to work."

"How about the laundress?" I suggested.

"Ah! the laundress," repeated Twistleton thoughtfully; "the laundress."

So Mrs. Buttick, the laundress, was sent for when Foss came in; but she denied all knowledge of the typewriter or the writing, making a new suggestion, which did not, to our thinking, much advance the solution of the mystery, and that was that the culprit was the cat.

"It is a message," said Twistleton mysteriously; "a message!"

"Nonsense!" I said. "Some fellow has strolled in, and written the name for fun."

"Fun!" cried Twistleton indignantly. "Fun!" And then more quietly: "No, I am sure of it; it is a message."

Very little of Buncombe *v.* Badger could I get into Twistleton's head that day. Plans and specifications he seemed not to understand; the seductive literary style of the affidavit had no charm for him. He could only gaze at the paper in his hand, and murmur ever and anon, "A message!"

I saw it was best to humor him, and at my suggestion the typewriter was locked up that night, and he took the key with him into his bedroom. We had had a rattling good dinner together, and when I left Twistleton he was in much better spirits.

"If the ghost comes to-night, he won't be able to get at the typewriter anyhow," I said, laughing.

"Hush! I don't know," replied Twistleton solemnly. "It is no jesting subject."

I went my way, wondering how a man with Twistleton's practice could believe in ghosts, and who the deuce had written Charley Colston's name on the typewriter.

The next morning I walked down to Twistleton's di-

rectly after breakfast. I found him in the wildest imaginable condition. He had taken every precaution, locking up the typewriter, placing the key under his pillow; and yet, here was the message, as he called it, printed in clear, faultless style: "Charley Colston. He is with your wife. Charley Colston."

"I must go. I must go. Oh, Penrose! what shall I do?" he cried in agony as I entered the room.

"Go?" I said; "and who is to lead in Buncombe *v.* Badger?"

He was silent, and buried all of his face, except his whiskers, in his hands. Even his hands, large and uncouth as they were, could not contain his whiskers.

"Think of Writson & Clame. What will they say?" I urged, seeing the effect that my words had on him. "They rely on you in this case."

The name of this eminent firm seemed to calm Twistleton to some extent.

"My dear Penrose," he said in a trembling voice, "this is a message; I am sure of it. But I will do my duty; I will stay by my clients."

"Twistleton, you speak like a Queen's Counsel and a man of honor," I said, seizing him by the hand, proud to shake it. "If it is a message," I added to humor him, "it will come again to-night. I will tell you what we will do. We will watch the typewriter all night."

Twistleton wrung my hand with gratitude at this suggestion of mine, and calmed himself. I made him eat some of his cold chop, and sent for some brandy and water for him instead of the tea, which had already stood in the teapot for more than an hour. Then I endeavored to coach him in Buncombe *v.* Badger, but with small success. Then we went over to the Appeal Court, in which I took my seat; for though I was not briefed in the case, I had nothing else to do, and was interested in seeing how Twistleton got on with it. He was very able at picking up a case as he went along, and the Court of Appeals stood greatly in awe of him. I had never seen him as nervous as he was

to-day—not even on his wedding day—and I was quite frightened for him.

Lord Usher, M.R., supported by Smugg, L.J., and Summerbosh, L.J., formed the court. Twistleton came in late; he had been at a consultation. As he entered I heard two solicitors' clerks say to each other:

"Who is that with the whiskers?"

"Twistleton, Q.C.; he has the biggest practice at the bar."

"He looks like a boiled owl," suggested his companion.

"Drinks, I believe," was the reply.

This was horrible, for Twistleton was a follower of Prebendary Falutin, the great teetotaller.

But certainly Twistleton had a dissipated look this morning. His eyes were red, and the lines under his eyes were very dark and hollow; his cheeks were pale and yellow. Something of this kind, I fancy, the Master of the Rolls remarked to Lord Justice Smugg, who nodded assent.

Twistleton rose to open the case, which was a very intricate one, and Lord Usher, according to his constant practice, interrupted him with the regularity of a piece of clockwork every two and a half minutes, and then wondered why he did not understand the case and shook himself impatiently. Much to Lord Usher's astonishment, Twistleton did not deliver any of those stinging retorts by which he was wont to keep the Court of Appeal in order, and frighten their lordships into deciding in his favor. On noticing this, Lord Usher began to chaff and rally Twistleton in a manner that was the admiration of the junior bar, the two lords justices, and, not least of all, of the Master of the Rolls himself. At length Twistleton, in expatiating on the merits of Buncombe's sewing machine, alluded to it as a typewriter. Whereupon Lord Usher said, with a humorous leer, that if it had been a question of typewriters, no doubt Mr. Twistleton would have been called as a specialist to give evidence, and would not have been arguing the case before them. At which those in the court

who knew of Twistleton's fad tittered; and his lordship's namesakes who stand about the court put their hands before their faces and shook visibly for a moment or two, and then called out "Hush!" and looked angry. But Twistleton lost his temper over this, and asked his lordship if his lordship meant to hint that the court did not want to hear him; and intimated his intention, if such was the case, of sitting down. And then the whole court was really quite silent for a minute or two, in anticipation of a row; and every one ceased to fidget, and paid close attention to Lord Usher; to hear him, with his blandest and most urbane of smiles, explaining how it was the great privilege of that court to listen to Mr. Twistleton, and what a high value they set upon that privilege, and how it was quite inconceivable to him (Lord Usher) that he (Mr. Twistleton) could imagine for a moment that this court or any other court should wish him to sit down. Whereupon Twistleton murmured that his lordship was very good, meaning thereby that he should like to be with his lordship in a small room where he could give him a bit of his mind. Then the case proceeded quite regularly, until Twistleton handed Lord Usher a lot of papers to explain his case; and Lord Usher, coming to one, said, with a knowing side glance at Smugg, L.J., that, from the handwriting, it must be a note of Mr. Twistleton's in another case; as he did not know that anyone of the name of Charles Colston was a party to this case. And what would have happened then I don't know; only the court rose for lunch.

I heard two or three people say that day that "Twistleton, poor fellow, was doing more work than he ought to"; that "Twistleton was a clever fellow, but he could not afford to burn the candle at both ends." Indeed, Twistleton's strange conduct in Buncombe *v.* Badger was the general topic of conversation in the robing room.

When Twistleton came out of court, I had the greatest difficulty to prevent him from rushing down to Norfolk by the night train. He was sure it was true; he be-

lieved in the message. I calmed him down, and we had dinner together at my club. He had to continue his speech in the morning. I tried to coach him in Buncombe *v.* Badger, but it was of no avail. I do not think he even knew for which side he was appearing.

We agreed that we would sit up in watches and so keep our eye on the typewriter all night. There was a sofa in the recess of the window, and Twistleton sent me to bed and placed himself on this. I bade him good night, and took his bed for the first half of the night. About two o'clock in the morning I awoke and went to Twistleton. He was wide awake, reading some papers on the sofa.

"Have you seen anything?" I asked.

"Nothing whatever," he replied.

"Nor heard anything?"

"Not a sound."

We took the lamp to the typewriter and opened it. There was the sheet of paper as he always left it, untouched. Twistleton locked it up again and took the key.

"Put it under your pillow."

"I will," he replied. "It's very good of you to sit up like this."

"It's nothing at all, I assure you," I answered.

"Keep strict watch, won't you?"

"I promise you," I said.

Twistleton shook me by the hand with emotion, and went out; he looked very ill and wretched, I thought, and was sorry for him. Was it a ghost's message or what, that was making his life a burden to him? Should I solve the mystery to-night?

I waited about an hour and a half. The dawn came peeping through the painted shutters and made the lamp look dim. I was almost dozing—in fact, I had shut my eyes, and lost consciousness for perhaps a minute, perhaps more. A sharp clicking sound awoke me. It was the typewriter. There, seated on a chair in front of it, playing nimbly on the queer instrument, was a white, misty figure. It had finished. It closed the cover down and turned the key.

It wheeled round to the door, and I saw the face and whiskers I knew so well; it was Twistleton himself.

My first impulse was to wake him, but I had heard that it was dangerous to wake persons walking in their sleep. He wanted all the sleep he could get, so I decided to let him alone, walk down to my own chambers and get some rest myself. When I got out into Old Square I could not help roaring with laughter. It was too funny. The idea of old Twistleton writing messages to himself on the typewriter, and being frightened out of his wits by them. What a story to tell against him! No one would believe it; it was too good to be true.

I awoke a little late the next morning, but went straight down to Old Square before breakfast. Alas! I was too late. There was Foss in misery over a hasty scrawl of Twistleton's. He had gone to Barndore by the early train. Foss was to make any excuse he thought fit to Writson & Clame. There was the typewriter shattered into a thousand pieces, its intricate machinery a shapeless chaos. I shuddered to think what would happen if there was anything between Charley Colston and Mrs. Twistleton.

In town everyone was asking what had become of Twistleton. The rumor went round the law courts that he was insane. I maintained a discreet silence. Mr. Clame was almost crying, as Slokoach, murmuring something about "bad news, and his learned leader," rose to continue Twistleton's opening. Lord Usher, unrestrained by the presence of Twistleton, made the Court of Appeal a place of fiery torment to that eminent elderly junior, Mr. Slokoach. Bustle, Q.C. for Badger, was not even called upon to reply; Buncombe and Another were dismissed, with costs.

The early train stopped, as I knew, at every station, forty in number. I could imagine poor Twistleton's state of mind as he pottered along in a slow train to Barndore. He arrived at the house about breakfast time—I have the story from Grimbleton, who was there—he came into the breakfast room, and his appearance elicited a shout of surprise.

"What has become of Buncombe *v.* Badger?" cried Lord Barndore. "Settled, eh?"

"Not that I know of," muttered Twistleton sulkily; and then, looking round fiercely, asked, "Where's my wife?"

"Not down yet," replied Lord Barndore.

Twistleton looked hastily round, as though in search of some one else, and then tore upstairs to his wife's room. The whole company looked at each other in silence.

There was some explanation about "bad news," but the Twistletons never went into mourning; and Mrs. Twistleton seemed very merry all that day. It was true that Twistleton was moody and shut himself up a good deal. Grimbleton told me that he never understood the whole business in the least. In fact, in Twistleton's circle it was a nine days' wonder. By the bye, I almost forgot to mention that Charley Colston left Barndore to be married in Scotland the day after Twistleton came to town.

When Twistleton returned to Old Square he was a sadder and a wiser man. He gave up believing in ghosts, and did not buy another typewriter. I told Twistleton that I would not let the matter go any farther, and I mentioned at the time that he might get me the junior brief in Buncombe *v.* Badger, which went to the House of Lords, where, through Twistleton's clear arguments, Lord Usher and Lords Justices Smugg and Summerbosh were overruled.

That year, mostly through Twistleton's influence, my fee book credited me with two thousand pounds.

I have kept my secret well, but since Twistleton succeeded Lord Usher as Master of the Rolls Lady Twistleton has not called on Mrs. Penrose, and, although my wife assures me that she is rather glad of it, she is always telling me now that she does not think so good a story should be lost to the world as that of "Twistleton's typewriter."